

DISCOURSES
CONSERNING
Evangelical
L O V E,
Church-Peace and Unity:
In Five CHAPTERS.

CHAP. I. *Complaints of want of Love and Unity among Christians; How to be managed; and where is the fault.*

CHAP. II. *Commendations of Love and Unity; their Proper Objects, with their general Rules and measures of Love towards all Mankind in general; Allows not Salvation unto any without Faith in Jesus Christ: Of the Differences in Religion as to Outward Worship.*

CHAP. III. *The Nature of the catholic Church, the First and Principal Object of Christians Love; Differences among the members of this Church, of what Nature and how to be managed.*

CHAP. IV. *Want of Love and Unity among Christians justly complained of; Causes of Divisions and Schisms, 1. Misapprehensions of Evangelical Unity. 2. Neglect in Churches to attend upon known Gospel Duties. 3. Trusting in worldly Grandeur, Reminders of Corruptions, Weakness and Ignorance. 4. Remedies thereof.*

CHAP. V. *The Grounds and Reasons of Nonconformity, &c.*

By the Late Reverend John Owen, D. D.

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Christian Love and Peace.

CHAP. I.

Complaints of want of Love and Unity among Christians, how to be managed, and whence fruitless. Charge of Guilt on some, why now remov'd, and for whose sakes. Personal miscarriages of any not excus'd. Those who manage the Charge mentioned not agreed.



He great Differences that are in the world amongst Professors of the Gospel about things relating to the Worship of God, do exercise more or less the minds of the Generality of men of all sorts: For either in *themselves*, or their *Consequents*, they are looked on to be of great importance, Some herein regard principally that disadvantageous influence which they are supposed to have into mens *spiritual* and

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Eternal Concernments : Others, that Aspect which they fancy them to have upon the *Publick Peace* and tranquility of this world. Hence in all Ages such divisions have caused *great thoughts of heart* ; especially because it is very difficult to make a right judgement either of their Nature, or their Tendency. But generally by all they are looked on as *evil* ; by some, for what they are in themselves; by others, from the disadvantage which they bring (as they suppose) unto their secular interest. Hence there are amongst many great *Complaints* of them, and of that want of *Love* which is looked on as their cause. And indeed it seems not only to be in the *Liberty*, but to be the *Duty* of every man soberly to complain of the Evils which he would, but cannot remedy. For such complaints testifying a Sense of their *Evil*, and a desire of their *Cure*, can be no more than what Love unto the Publick Good requir-eth of us. And if in any case this may be allowed, it must be so in that of *Divisions* about sacred things, or the worship of God, with their causes and manner of managment amongst men. For it will be granted that the Glory of God, the Honour of Christ, the Progress of the Gospel, with the Edification and peace of the Church, are deeply concerned in them, and highly prejudiced by them. And in these things all men have, if not an *equal*, yet such a *special* interest, as none can forbid them the due consideration of.

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of. No man therefore ought to be judged as though he did *transgress his Rule*, or goe beyond his Line, who soberly expresth his sense of their Evil, and of the Calamities wherewith they are attended. Yet must it not be denyed, but that much *Prudence* and moderation is required unto the due managment of such *Complaints*. For those which either consist in, or are accompanied with *Invectives* against the Persons or ways of others, instead of a Rational discourse of the causes of such Divisions, and their Remedies, do not only open, enflame and irritate former wounds, but prove matters of new contention and strife, to their great increase. Besides in the manifold Divisions and Differences of this nature amongst us, all men are supposed to be under an adherence unto some one *Party* or other. Herein every Man stands at the same *Distance* from others, as they do ~~for~~ him. Now all *complaints* of this kind, carry along with them a tacit Justification of those by whom they are made. For no man can be so profligate as to judge himself and the way of Religious worship wherein he is engaged, to be the cause of *blameable Divisions* amongst Christians, and yet continue therein: Reflections therefore of *Guilt* upon others, they are usually replenished withall. But if those are not attended with evident Light and unavoidable *Conviction*, because they proceed from Persons, supposed not indifferent, yea culpable in this very matter

matter more or less themselves, by them whom they reflect upon, they are generally turned into Occasions of new exasperations and contests. And hence it is come to pass, that although all good men do on all occasions bewail the want of *Love*, forbearance and *condemnation*, that is found among Professors of the Gospel, and the *Dispositions* which follow thereon, yet no comfortable nor advantageous effects do thence ensue: Yea not only is all Expectation of that blessed fruit, which a general serious consent unto such *Complaints* might produce, as yet utterly frustrated; but the small remainders of Love and Peace amongst us are hazzarded and impaired, by mutual charges of the want and loss of them, on the Principles and Practices of each other. We have therefore need of no small *Watchfulness* and care, least in this matter it fall out with us, as it did with the

- 2 Sam. *Israelites* of old, in another occasion. For
 19. 41, when they had by a sinful sedition cast out
 42, 43. *David* from amongst them, and from reigning over them; after a little while, seeing their folly and iniquity, they assembled together with one consent to bring him home again. But in the very beginning of their indeavours to this purpose, falling into a dispute about which of the *Tribes* had the *greatest interest* in him, they not only desisted from their first design, but fell into another distemper of no less dangerous importance than what they were newly delivered from. It must be acknowledged

knowned that there hath been a *sinful decay of Love* amongst Professors of the Gospel in this Nation, if not a violent casting of it out, by such prejudices and corrupt Affections, as wherewith it is wholly inconsistent. And it would be a matter of no small lamentation, if upon the blooming of a design for its Recovery and Reduction, with all its trains, as *forbearance, Confession, Gentleness and Peace*, if any such design there be, by contests about the occasions and causes of its Absence, with too much *seriousness* *fierceness* in our own vindication, and pleas of a *special Interest in it* above others, new distempers should be raised, hazzarding its everlasting exclusion.

In this state of things we have hitherto contented our selves with the *Testimony of our own hearts* unto the sincerity of our desires, as to walk in Love and Peace with all Men, so to exercise the fruits of them on all occasions administered unto us. And as this alone we have thus far opposed unto all those Censures and Reproaches which we have undergone to the contrary; so therewithall have we supported our selves under *other things*, which we have also suffered. Farther to declare our thoughts and Principles in and about the worship of God, than they are evidenced and testified unto, by our *Practice*, we have hitherto forborne; least the most moderate claims of an *especial interest* in the common Faith and Love of Christians, should

occasion new contests and troubles unto ourselves and others. And we have observed, that sometimes an *over-hasty endeavour* to extinguish flames of this nature, hath but increased and diffused them; when perhaps if left alone, their *fuel* would have failed, and themselves expired. Besides, a *peaceable practice*, especially if accompanied with a quiet baring of injuries, gives a greater conviction to unprejudiced minds, of peaceable principles and inclinations, than any *verbal declaration*, whose sincerity is continually obnoxious to the blast of evil Surmises. In a Resolution therefore to the same purpose we had still continued, had we not so openly and frequently been called on, either to vindicate our *Innocency*, or to confess and acknowledge our *Evil*. One of these we hope is the aim and tendency of all those charges or Accusations, for want of Love, peaceableness, and due compliance with others, of being the Authors and fomentors of *Schisms* and divisions, that have been published against us, on the account of our dissent from some Constitutions of the *Church of England*. For we do not think that any good men, can please themselves, in merely *accusing their Brethren*, whereby they add to the weight of their present troubles, and evidently expose them unto more. For every charge of *Guilt* on those who are already under sufferings, gives new encouragement and fierceness to the minds of them from whom they suffer. And as no greater

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greater encouragement can be given unto men to *proceed* in any way wherein they are engaged, then by their Justification in what they have already done; so the only justification of those who have stirred up Persecution against others, consists in charging *Guilt* on them that are Persecuted. As therefore we shall readily acknowledge any *Evil* in our Persons, Principles or ways, which we are, or may be convinced of; So the sober vindication of Truth and Innocency, that none of the ways of God be evil spoken of by reason of us, is a Duty, in the care whereof we are no less concerned. Yea did we design and directly endeavour our *own Justification*, we should do no more than the prime dictates of the Law of Nature, and the Example of some of the best of Men, will give us a sufficient warrant for. Besides the clearing of *Private Persons*, especially if they are many, from undue charges and false accusations, belongs unto *publick Good*; that those who have the Administration of it committed unto them, may not be misled to make a wrong Judgment concerning what they have to do; as *David* was in the Case of *Mephibosheth* upon the false suggestions of *Ziba*. Neither could we be justly blamed should we be more than ordinarily *urgent* herein; considering how prone the Ears of Men are to receive calumnious Accusations concerning such as from whom they expect neither Profit nor Advantage; and how slow in giving admittance

2 Sam.
16. 4.

tance to an address of the most modest defensive. But this is the least part of our present Design. Our onely aim is to declare those *Principles* concerning mutual Love and Unity among Christians, and Practices in the Worship of God, wherein our own Consciences do find Rest and Peace, and others have so much misjudged us about. This therefore we shall briefly do; and that without such Reflexions or Recriminations, as may any way exasperate the Spirits of others, or in the least impede that *Reintroduction* of Love and Concord, which it is the Duty of us all to labour in. Wherefore we shall herein have no regard unto the Revilings, Reproaches, and threatnings of them, who seem to have had no regard to Truth, or Modesty, or Sobriety, indeed to God or Man, in the manangement of them. With such it is our Duty *not to strive*, but to commit our cause to him that Judgeth Righteously, especially with respect unto those impure outrages *which goe before unto judgment*. Furious Persons, animated by their secular Interests, or desire of Revenge, unacquainted with the Spirit of the Gospel, and the true nature of the Religion revealed by Jesus Christ, incompassionate towards the Infirmities of the minds of Men, whereof yet none in the world give greater Instances than *themselves*, who have no thoughts but to trample under foot and destroy all that differ from them, we shall rather pity and pray for,

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then either contend withal, or hope to convince. Such they are, as if outward prevalency were added to their Principles and desires, they would render all Christians like the *Moabites*, *Ammonites*, and *Edomites*; 2 Chron. who came out to fight against *Judah*. The 20. 23. two greater Parties upon some difference or distaste, conspire, at first to destroy the *Inhabitants of Seir*; not doubting but that when they had dispatched them out of the way, they should accord well enough among themselves: But the Event deceived their Expectation; their *Rage* ceased not untill issued in the mutual destruction of them all. No otherwise would it be with those who want nothing but *an opportunity* to exterminate their next dissenters in matters of Religion. For when they had accomplished that design, the same Principle and *Rage* would arm them to the wasting of the residue of Christians, or their own. For a conceit of the *Lawfulness* hereof, is raised from a desire of enlarging power and dominion, which is boundless. Especially is it so, where an Empire over the *Reason*, Faith and Consciences of men is affected; which first produced the fatal Engine of *Papal Infallibility*; that nothing also could have strained the wit of man to invent, and nothing less can support. Unto such as these we shall not so much as tender satisfaction, untill they are capable of receiving the advice of the Apostle, *Eph. 4. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and*

and clamour, and Evil speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice. For untill this be done, men are to be esteemed but as raging waves of the Sea, foaming out their own shame, whom it is to no purpose to seek to pacifie, much less to contend withall.

It is for the Sake of them alone who really value and esteem, *Love*, *Peace*, and *Unity* among Christians for themselves, that we here tender an account of our thoughts and Principles concerning them. For even of them there are some who *unduely charge* us with owning of Principles, destructive unto Christian *Love* and *Condescention*, and suited to perpetuate the *Schisms* and *Divisions* that are amongst us. Whether this hath been occasioned by an over-valuation of their own *Apprehensions*, conceiting that their judgments ought to give Rule and measure to other mens; or whether they have been, it may be insensibly unto themselves, byassed by *Provocations* as they suppose unjustly given them, we are not out of hopes, but that they may be convinced of their mistakes. Upon their *Indications* we have searched our *Consciences*, Principles, and Practices, to find whether there be any such way of perverseness in them, as we are charged withall; and may with confidence say, that we have a *Discharge* from thence, where we are principally concerned. Having therefore satisfied that Duty which on this occasion was in the first place incumbent on us,

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we shall now for their *Satisfaction*, and our own *Vindication* with all impartial Men, declare what are our thoughts and Judgments, what are our Principles, ways, and Practices, in and about the great concerns of Christian Love, Unity, and Peace; referring the final decision of all differences, unto him, who *hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness, by the Man whom he hath ordained.*

This being our present Design, none may expect, that we should attempt to justify or excuse, any of those *miscarriages* or failings that are charged on *some*, or *all* of those Professors of the Gospel, who at this Day come not up unto full Communion with the Church of England. For we know that *no man liveth and sinneth not*; yea that in *many things we all offend*. We all know but in part, and are liable to manifold Temptations, even all such as are common unto Men. Those only we have no esteem of, *who* through the feaver of Pride have lost the Understanding of their own weak, frail, and sinful condition. And we do acknowledge, that there are amongst us, *Sins against the Lord our God*, for which he might not only give us up unto the Reproaches and Wrath of Men in this World, but himself also cast us off utterly and for ever. We shall not therefore in the least *complain* of those who have most industriously represented unto the publick view of the world, the weakness
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miscarriages, that have really fallen out amongst some or more of them whose Cause we plead, and discovered those *corrupt Affections*, from whence, helped on with variety of Temptations, they might probably proceed; Nor shall we use any Reflections on them who have severely, and we fear *Maliciously* laid to their charge things which they know not; as hoping that by the former the Guilty may learn what to amend, now they are taught with such thorns and briers as are the scorns and reproaches of the World; and by the latter the Innocent may know what to avoid. Such charges and Accusations therefore we shall wholly pass over, with our hearty prayers that the same or *worse evils* may never be found amongst them by whom they are accused. Much less shall we concern our selves in those Reflections on them, which are raised from the *Words, Expressions*, or Actions of particular Persons, as they have been reported and tossed up and down in the *Lips of talkers*. The debate of such things tends only to mutual exasperations, and endless strife. It may be also; that for the most part, they are *false*, or misreported invidiously, or misapplied; and true or false, have been sufficiently avenged by severe retortions. And in such *Altercations* few men understand the sharpness of their own words. Their *Edge* is towards them whom they oppose: But when a return of the like Expressions is made unto themselves,

selves, they are sensible how they pierce. So are provocations heightened, and the first interment of reducing *Love*, ends in mutual declamatory contentions. All things therefore of this nature, we shall pass over, and help to bury by our Silence.

The principal charge against us, and that whereinto all other are resolved, is our *Non-conformity unto the present Constitutions of the Church of England*. For hence are we accused to be guilty of the want of Christian Love and peaceableness, of *Schism*, and an inclination to all sorts of Divisions, contrary to the Rules and Precepts of the Gospel. Now we think it not unreasonable to desire, that those who pass such censures on us, would attend unto the *common known Rule*, whereby alone a right Judgment in these cases may be made. For it is not equal that we should be concluded by other Mens particular *Measures*, as though by them we were to be regulated in the exercise of Love, and observance of Peace. And as we doubt not but that they fix those *measures* unto themselves in sincerity, according unto their own Light and Apprehension of things; so we are sure it will be no impeachment of their *Wisdom* or *Holiness*, to judge that others who differ from them, do with an equal integrity endeavour the direction and determination of their Consciences, in what they believe and Practise. Yea, if they have not pregnant evidence to the contrary, it is their duty

duty so to judge. A defect hereof is the spring of all that want of Love, whereof so great a *Complaint* is made. And rationally they are to be thought most sincere and scrupulous herein, who take up with determinations, that are greatly to their *outward* disadvantage. For unless it be from a conviction of present Duty with respect unto God, and their own *eternal* Good, men are not easily induced to close with a judgment about sacred things and religious Worship, which will not only certainly prejudice them, but endanger their ruine, in things *Temporal*. It is *ordinarily*, outward secular Advantages wherewith the Minds of Men are generally too much affected, that give an ealie admission unto Perswasions and Practices in Religion. By these are Men turned and changed every day from what before they professed; when we hear of no turnings unto a *suffering profession*, but what arise from strong & unavoidable convictions. Moreover should we indeavour to accommodate our selves to the *Lines* of other Men, it may make some change of the Persons with whom we have to doe, but would not in the least relieve us against the charges of *guilt of Schism* and want of Love which we suffer under. Some would prescribe this *Measure* unto us, that we should *occasionally joyn with Parish Assemblies* as now stated in all their worship and sacred Administrations; but will not require of us that we should absolutely forbear all other ways
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and means of our own Edification. Will this *Measure* satisfie all amongst us? will it free us from the imputation we suffer under? shall we not be said any more to want *Christian Love*, to be *factious* or guilty of Schism? It is known unto all how little it will conduce unto these Ends, and how little the most will grant that *Church Peace* is preserved thereby. Yea the *Difficulty* will be increased upon us beyond what an ordinary Ability can solve, though we doubt not but that it may be done. For if we can do *so much*, we may expect justly to be pressed severely to answer, why we do *no more*. For others say immediately, that our Attendance on the publick Worship must be *constant*, with a forbearance of all other ways of Religious worship beyond that of a Family; yet this they would have us so to doe, as in the meantime studiously to indeavour the *Reformation* of what is judged amiss in the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Church. This is the *measure* which is prescribed unto us by some; and we know not how many censures are passed upon us for a *nonconformity* thereunto. Will therefore a compliance unto this length better our condition? will it deliver us from the severest *Reflections* of being Persons unpeaceable and intolerable? shall we live in a perpetual *disimulation* of our Judgments as to what needeth Reformation? will that answer our Duty? or give us peace in our latter End?

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Shall we *profess* the persuasions of our minds in these things; and endeavour by all Lawful means to accomplish what we desire? Shall we then escape the severest censures, as of Persons *inclined to Schisms* and Divisions? Yea many great and wise Men of the Church of England doe look on this as the most pernicious Principle and Practice that any can betake themselves unto. And in reporting the *Heyl. Hist. Memorials* of former times, some of them of *Presb.* have charged all the calamities and Miseries that have befallen their Church, to have proceeded from Men of this Principle, endeavouring *Reformation* according unto Models of their own, without *Seperation*.

And could we conscientiously betake ourselves to the pursuit of the same Design, we should not, especially under present jealousies and exasperations, escape the same condemnation, that others before us have undergone. And so it is fallen out with some, which might teach them that their measures are not *authentick*; and they might learn Moderation towards them who cannot *come up unto them*. By the severity they meet withall, from those that *do outgo them*. Shall we therefore, which alone seems to remain, proceed yet farther, and making a Renunciation of all those Principles concerning the Constitution, Rule, and Discipline of the Church, with the ways and manner of the Worship of God to be observed in the Assemblies of it, come over unto a full Conformity unto the present Constitutions

*and we have observed,
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stitutions of the Church of *England*, and all the proceedings of its Rulers thereon? Yea this is that, say some, which is required of you, and that which would put an End unto all our Differences and Divisions. We know indeed that an *Agreement* in any thing or way, right or wrong, true or false, will promise so to do, and appear so to do, for a season: But it is *Truth* alone that will make such Agreements durable, or useful. And we are not engaged in an inquiry meerly after *Peace*, but after *Peace with Truth*. Yea to lay aside the Consideration of *Truth*, in a disquisition after *Peace* and Agreement in and about spiritual things, is to exclude a regard unto God and his Authority, and to provide only for our selves. And what it is which at present lays a *Prohibition* on our Consciences against the compliance proposed, shall be afterwards declared; neither will we here insist upon the discouragements that are given us, from the present state of the Church it self, which yet are not a few. Only we must say, that there doth not appear unto us in many that steadiness in the profession of the *Truth* owned amongst us upon, and since the Reformation, nor that consent upon the Grounds and Reasons of the Government and Discipline in it, that we are required to submit unto, which were necessary to invite any dissentors to a through Conformity unto it. That there are daily incrodes made upon the *ancient Doctrine* of

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this Church, and that without the least controule from them who pretend to be the sole Conservators of it, untill, if not the whole, yet the principal parts of it are laid waste, is sufficiently evident, and may be easily proved. And we fear not to own, that we cannot conform to *Armianism*, *Socinianism*, on the one hand, or *Popery* on the other, with what new or specious pretences soever they may be blended. And for the *Ecclesiastical Government*, as in the hands of *meer ecclesiastical Persons*, when it is agreed among themselves, whether it be *from Heaven or of Men*, we shall know the better how to judge of it. But suppose we should wave all such considerations, and come up to a *full Conformity* unto all that *is*, or *shall*, or *may* be required of us; will this give us an universally pleadable acquitment from the charges of the Guilt of want of Love, Schism and Divisions? We should indeed possibly be delivered from the noyse and *clamour* of a few, crying out *Sectaries*, *Phanatieks*, *Schismaticks*, *Church-Dividers*; but withal should continue under the censures of the great, and at present thriving *Church of Rome*, for the same supposed Crimes. And sure enough we are, that a compliance with them who have been the real causes and occasions of all the *Schisms* and Divisions that are amongst Christians almost in the whole world, would yield us no solid relief in the change of our condition. Yet without this no Men

can free themselves from the *loudest outcries* against them on the account of *Schism*. And this sufficiently manifests how little indeed they are to be valued, seeing for the most part, they are nothing but the *steam* of Interest and Party. It is therefore apparent that the Accommodations of our Judgments and Practices to the *measures* of other men, will afford us no real advantage, as to the imputations we suffer under; nor will give satisfaction unto all Professors of *Christianity* that we pursue Love and Peace in a due manner; For what *one sort* requireth of us, another will instantly disallow and condemn. And it is well if the Judgment of the *Major Part* of all sorts be not influenced by Custome, prejudices, and secular Advantages. We have therefore no way left, but that which indeed ought to be the *only way* of Christians in these things; namely to seek in sincerity the satisfaction of our own Consciences, and the approving of our hearts unto the search of them, in a diligent attendance unto our own especial Duty, according to that Rule which will neither deceive us, nor fail us. And an Account of what we do herein, we shall now render unto them that follow Truth with Peace.

CHAP. II.

Commendations of Love and Vnity. Their proper objects with their general Rules and measures. Of Love toward all mankind in general. Allows not salvation unto any without faith in Christ Jesus. Of the differences in Religion as to outward Worship.

THe Foundation of our discourse might be laid in the commendation of *Christian Love, and Unity*; and thereon we might easily enlarge; as also abound in a collection of *Testimonies* confirming our Assertions. But the old reply in such a Case, *by whom ever were they discommended* evidenceth a labour therein to be needless and superfluous. We shall therefore only say, that they are greatly mistaken, who from the *Condition* whereunto at present we are *driven* and necessitated, do suppose that we value not these things at as high a Rate as themselves, or any other Professors of Christian Religion in the world. A greater *noyse* about them may be made possibly by such as have accommodated their name and notion to their *own Interests*, and who point their Pleas about them, and their pretences of them, to their own secular Advantage. But as for a real valuation of

of the *things themselves*, as they are required of us, and prescribed unto us in the Gospel, we shall not willingly be found, to come behind any that own the name of Christ in the world. We know that God hath suiled himself, the *God of Love, Peace and Order*, in the Church, because they are eminently from him, and highly accepted with him. And as *Love* is the *new Commandement* which *Jesus Christ* hath given unto his Disciples, so he hath appointed it to be the *bond of Perfection* unto them; which nothing else will ever be, however *finely invented* for them, or *forceably imposed* on them. Without this *Love*, in what relates to Church Communion, whatever else we are, we are but as *sounding brass and tinkling Cymbals*. And all *Unity* or *Agreement* in outward order not proceeding from, and animated by this *Love*, are things wherein neither Christ nor the Gospel are much concerned. An indeavour *Phil. 2. 2.* also after *one Mind* and *one Judgment*, amongst all Believers, for a help unto us, to *1 Cor. 1. 10.* keep the *Unity of the spirit in the bond of Peace*, we acknowledge to be indispensably required of us. And therefore where any *Opinion*, or *Practice*, in or about Religion or the worship of God, do apparently in themselves impair the Gracious holy principles of Love and Peace, or obstruct Men in the Exercise of any Duties which those Principles require or lead unto, it is a great and weighty prejudice against their Truth, and

Acceptation with God. As therefore we shall not boast of the *prevalency* of these Principles in our minds; seeing that though we should *know nothing* to the contrary by *our selves*, yet are we not therefore *justified*; so we are assured that none can justly condemn us, for the want of them, unless they can make good their charge by Instances not relating to the peculiar Differences, between them and us. For what *doth so*, will neither warrant any to make such a Judgment, nor carry any *Conviction* in it towards them that are judged. Upon the whole matter, we shall not easily be diverted from pursuing our claim unto an *equal Interest* in these things with any other Professors of the Christian Religion; although at present we do it not by enlarged Commendations of them. Much less are we in the least moved or shaken in our Minds from the *Accusations* of them, who having the Advantage of Force and Power, do make a Compliance with themselves, in all their *impositions* and self-interested Concessions, the sole measure of other mens exercise and actings of these Principles. We have a much safer Rule whereby to make a Judgment of them, whereunto we know we *shall do well to attend, as unto a Light shining in a dark Place*. But now whereas all these things, namely *Love, Peace, and Unity*, are equally dear unto us; yet there are different Rules prescribed, for the Exercise and pursuit of them. Our *Love* is to be *Catholick*, uncon-

unconfined as the beams of the Sun, or as the
 showers of rain that fall on the whole Earth.
 Nothing of Gods Rational Creation in this
 world, is to be exempted from being the Ob-
 ject thereof. And where only any Excep-
 tion might seem to be warranted by some
 Mens causeless hatred, with unjust and un-
 reasonable persecution of us, there the exer-
 cise of it is given us in *especial and strictest*
charge; which is one of the noble singulari-
 ties of Christian Religion. But whereas men
 are cast into various conditions on the ac-
 count of their Relation unto God, the actual
 exercise of Love towards them is required of
 us in a suitable variety. For it is God him-
 self, in his Infinite Excellencies, who is the
 first and *adequate* Object of our Love; which
 descends unto others according to their Par-
 ticipations from him, and the especial Rela-
 tions created by his Appointment; whereof
 we shall speak afterwards. Our Duty in
 the Observance of *Peace*, is, as unto its Ob-
 ject, equally extended. And the Rule or
Measure given us herein, is the utmost of our
 indeavours in all ways of Truth and Righte-
 ousness, which are required, or may have a
 tendency thereunto. For as we are comman-
 ded to follow *Peace with all men* under the *Heb. 12.*
 same indispensable necessity as to obtain and *14.*
 observe *Holiness* in our own Persons, without
 which *none shall see God*; so as to the mea-
 sure of our indeavours unto this End, we
 are directed, *if it be possible, and as far as in us* *Rom. 11.*

lieth, to live peaceably with all Men. The Rule for *Unity*, as it is supposed to comprize all Church Communion, falls under many Restrictions. For herein the especial Commands of Christ, and *Institutions* of the Gospel committed unto our Care and Observance falling under consideration, our Practice is precisely limited unto those Commands, and by the nature of those Institutions.

These being the things we are to attend unto, and these being their general *Rules* and measures, we shall with respect unto the present state of Religious Affairs in the world, amongst those who make Profession of the Christian Religion, plainly declare what are our thoughts and Judgments, what we conceive to be our *Duty*, and what is our Practice, submitting them unto the present Apprehensions of unprejudiced Persons, leaving the *final Sentence* and determination of our Cause to the Judgment-Seat of Jesus Christ.

Love toward all *Mankind in general* we acknowledge to be required of us; and we are *Debtors* in the fruits of it to the whole Creation of God. For he hath not only implanted the *Principles* of it in that nature whereof we are in common Partakers with the whole Race and Kind, whereunto all hatred and its Effects were originally *foreign* and introduced by the *Devil*; nor only given us his *Command* for it, enlarging on its grounds and

The and Reasons in the Gospel; but in his Design of recovering us out of our lapsed condition unto a Conformity with himself, proposeth in an especial manner the Example of his *own Love and Goodness*, which are extended unto all, for our imitation, *Mat. 5. 44, 45.* His *Philanthropie* and Communicative Love, from his own infinite self-fulness, wherewith all Creatures in all Places, Times, and Seasons, are filled and satisfied, as from an immeasurable Ocean of Goodness, are proposed unto us to direct the exercise of that drop from the *Divine Nature*, wherewith we are intrusted. *Love your Enemies*, saith our Saviour, *bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, who maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and the Good, and sendeth rain on the Just, and on the Unjust.* Now all Mankind may be cast into two Ranks or Orders. For First, there are those who are yet without Christ, being Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the World; such we mean as are either *Negatively* or *Privatively* Infidels, or Unbelievers; who have yet never heard the Sound of the Gospel, or do continue to refuse and reject it, where it is proposed and tendred unto them. And there are those, Secondly, who have in one way or other

Ephes. 2.

12,

ther received the Doctrine of the Gospel, and do make profession thereof in the World. To both these sorts we do acknowledge that we owe the Duty of Love. Even towards the *Infidel, Pagan, and Mahumetan world, Jews and Gentiles*, we are Debtors in this Duty; and we desire to be humbled for it as our Sin, wherein we are wanting in the discharge of it, or wherein the fruits of it do not abound in us to the Praise of God. Now *Love*, in the first notion of it, is the willing of a wanted Good unto the Object of it, or those that are Loved, producing an endeavour to effect it, unto the utmost of the Ability of them in whom it is. Where this absent Good is of great importance, the first natural and genuine Effect of Love is *Compassion*. This Good, as unto all *Unbelievers*, is whatever should deliver them from present or eternal misery; whatever should lead, guide, or bring them unto Blessedness in the Enjoyment of God. Besides the *absence* hereof is accompanied even in this world, with all that Blindness and Darkness of Mind, all that slavery unto Sin and the *Devil*, that can any way concur to make a Rational Being truly miserable. If we have not *hearts* like the flint or *Adamant*, we cannot but be moved with *Compassion* towards so many perishing Souls, originally made like our selves in the Image of God, and from whom that we differ in any thing, is an Effect of meer Sovereign Grace, and not the fruit of our own Contrivance, nor the Reward of our worth

worth or merit. And those who are altogether unconcerned in *others*, are not much concerned in *themselves*; for the true Love of our selves, is the Rule of our Love unto other Men. Again, *Compassion* proceeding from Love will work by *Prayer* for Relief: For it is God alone who can supply their wants; and our only way of treating with him about it, is by our humble Supplications. And if herein also we should be found *wanting*, we should more judg our selves to be defective in true Christian Love and Charity, than we can for many of those mistakes which are charged on us in other things, were we convinced that such they are, which as yet we are not. It is therefore our continual Prayer, that God would *send out his Light and his Truth* unto the utmost parts of the Earth, to visit by them those dark places, which are yet filled with habitations of cruelty; that he would remove the vail of covering which is yet on the Face of many great and Populous Nations, that the whole Earth may be filled with the *knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the Sea*; even that according to his Promise, *he would turn to the People a pure Language, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent*. And this we desire to be found doing, not in a formal or Customary manner, but out of a sincere *Compassion* for the Souls of men, a deep sense of the Interest herein of the Glory of God, and a desire after the Accomplishment

plishment of those Prophecies and Promises in the Scripture, which speak comfortably towards an Expectation of abundant Grace to be manifested unto the residue of Sinners, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in the latter dayes. Moreover, unto Compassion and Supplications, Love requireth that we should add also all other possible *Endeavours for their Relief*. Herein consists that work and Labour of Love, which are so much recommended unto us. But the *Actings of Love* in these most useful ways, are for the most part obstructed unto us, by the want of opportunities, which under the Guidance of Divine Providence are the Rule of our Call unto the Duties wherein such endeavours consist, and whereby they may be expressed. Only this at present we have to rejoyce in, that through the unwearyed Labours of some Holy and Worthy Persons, *Sundry Churches of Indians* are lately called and gathered in *America*, wherein the Natives of those parts of the World, who for so many Generations *sate in Darknes, and in the shadow of death*, do under the guidance of Pastors and Elders of their own, walk in the *Fellowship of the Gospel*, giving Glory to God by *Jesus Christ*. And let it not seem impertinent that we have given this Account of our Judgments concerning that Love which we do and ought to bear unto *all*, even the *worst of men*; seeing those by whom our Testimony is received, will not, nay, cannot easily suppose that we would wilfully neglect the exercise

exercise of the same Affections towards those, concerning whom our Obligations thereunto, are unspeakably greater and more Excellent.

There is indeed another kind of pretended charity towards this sort of men, which we profess we have not for them, although we judge we do not want it. For there can be no want unto any of an *Error* or mistake, wherein the charity intended doth consist. And this is the judgment of some, that they or *some* of them may attain salvation or eternal blessedness in the condition wherein they are, *without the knowledge* of Jesus Christ. This we acknowledge we neither believe, nor hope concerning them; nor, to speak plainly, can desire it should be so, unless God had otherwise revealed himself concerning *Jesus Christ* and them, than yet he hath done. And we are so far from supposing that there is in us on this account any *blameable defect of charity*, that we know our selves to be freed by this perswasion from a dangerous error, which if admitted, would both weaken our own faith, and impair all the due and proper effects of charity towards others. For though *1 Cor. 3.*
there be that are called gods, whether in Heaven 5. 6.
or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many) yet unto us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. We know there is no *Acts 4.*
 salvation in any other but by *Jesus Christ*; and *12.*
that

that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Nor is this Name given any otherwise amongst men, but by the Gospel : For it is not the giving of the person of Christ absolutely to be a *Mediatour*, but the declaration of his *Name* by the Gospel, as the means of salvation, that is intended. Hence our Lord Jesus Christ, giving that Commission to his Apostles to preach it, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every Creature*, he adds unto it that decretory sentence, concerning the everlasting condition of all men with respect thereunto ; *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.* As the *Preaching of the Gospel*, and the belief on Jesus Christ thereon, are the only means of obtaining salvation ; so all those who are not made partakers of them must perish eternally. So when the Apostle affirms that the *Jewes* would have hindred them from preaching to the *Gentiles* that they might be saved, he plainly declares that without it they could not so be. Neither were any of them ever better, or in a better condition, than they are described by the same Apostle, *Ephes. 2. 12.* And in sundry other places, wherein he allows them no possibility of obtaining eternal blessedness. Neither do we in this matter consider what *God can do*, or what he hath done to the communicating of grace and faith in Jesus Christ unto any particular persons at any time, or in any place, in an extraordinary manner.

We

Mark.
16. 15.
16.

1 Thess.
2. 16.

We are not called to make a judgment thereof, nor can any Rule be hence collected to regulate the exercise of our love. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but revealed things to us and our children, that we may do his will.* When and where such grace and faith do manifest themselves by their effects, we ought readily to own and embrace them. But the only inquiry in this matter is, What those that are utterly destitute of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, either as made *originally* in the promise, or as *explained* in the Gospel, may under the meer conduct of the Light of Nature, as consisting in the innate principles of Reason, with their improvement, or as increased by the consideration of the effects of *divine power* and Providence, by the strength and exercise of their own moral principles attain unto, as unto their present acceptance with God, and future eternal salvation. That they may be *saved in every Sect, who live exactly according to the Light of Nature*, is a Doctrine anathematized by the Church of England, *Artic 18.* And the Reason given hereof is, because the *Scriptures propose the Name of Jesus Christ alone whereby we may be saved.* And if we do believe that description which is given in the Scripture of men, their *moral abilities*, and their works, as they lye in the common state of Mankind, since the entrance of sin, with respect unto God and salvation, we shall not be able to be of another mind: For they are said to be *blind, yea to be darkness, to be dead in* *Luk. 4.*
 118f- 18.

Acts 26. trespasses and sins, not to receive the things of
18. the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness
Eph. 2. 1. unto them; and their minds to be enmity against
2, 3. God himself. That there may be any just ex-
Ch. 4. 18. pectation concerning such persons, that they
Rom. 8. 8. will work out their salvation with fear and
 trembling, we are not convinced: Neither do
 we think that God will accept of a more im-
 perfect obedience in them that know not Je-
 sus Christ, than he requires of them who do
 believe in him, for then should he prove a dis-
 advantage unto them. Beside, all their best
 works are severely reflected on in the Scrip-
 ture, and represented as unprofitable: For
 whereas in themselves they are compared to
 evil Trees, Thorns, and Briars, we are assured
 they neither do, nor can bring forth good
 grapes or Figs. Besides in the Scripture, the
 whole business of salvation in the first place
 turns upon the Hinge of Faith supernatural
Heb. 11. and divine; for without faith it is impossible to
6. please God; and, He that believeth not, shall be
Joh. 3. 15 damned; He that believeth not in the name of
36. the Son of God is condemned already; for nei-
Gal. 5. 6. ther Circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncir-
 cumcision, but faith that worketh by love: And
 it is by faith that the just shall live. That this
 Faith may be educed out of the obediential
 Principles of Nature, 'twas indeed the opinion
 of Pelagius of old; but 'twill not now, we
 hope, be openly asserted by any. Moreover,
 this Faith is in the Scripture, if not limited
 and determined, yet directed unto Jesus Christ

as its necessary peculiar Object: *For this is Life eternal, that we may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.* It seems therefore that the knowledge of the only true God, is not sufficient to attain eternal life, unless the knowledge of Jesus Christ also do accompany it: For *this is* the record of Heaven, that *God hath given unto us eternal Life, and this life is in his Son: He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* Which is enough to determine the controversie. And those Assertions, that there is *no other Name given amongst men, whereby they may be saved; and that other foundation can no man lay, save what is laid, that is, Jesus Christ;* are of the same importance; and it were needless to multiply the Testimonies that are given us to that purpose elsewhere. Neither can it be made to appear, that the concatenation of the saving means, whereby men that are *adult* are brought unto glory, is not absolutely universal: And amongst them there is *Vocation, or an effectual Calling to the knowledg of Christ by the Gospel.* Neither will the same Apostle allow a saving invocation of the Name of God to any but those that are brought to believe *by hearing the Word preached.* It is said, that God may by wayes secret and unknown to us, reveal Jesus Christ to them, and so by faith in him sanctifie their natures, and endow them with his Spirit; which things, it is granted, we suppose, are indispensibly necessary unto

1 Joh. 5.
11, 12.

Act 4. 12
1 Cor. 3.
11.

Rom. 8.
29, 30.

Rom. 10.
13, 14, 15

salvation. Those whom God thus deals with-
 all are not *Pagans*, but *Christians*, concerning
 whom none ever doubted, but they might be
 saved. It is also granted, that men may learn
 much of the power, wisdom and goodness
 of God, which both require and teach many
Duties to be performed towards him ; but
 withall we believe, that without *the internal*
sanctification of the Spirit, communicated by
 and with the knowledg of Jesus Christ, no man
 can be saved. But we intend not here to dis-
 pute about these things. Instead of an effect
 of Love and Charity, it is manifest that the
 Opinion which grants *salvation unto the Hea-*
then, or any of them, upon the due improve-
 ment of their Rational Faculties and moral
 Principles, ariseth from a want of due consi-
 deration of the true nature of Sin and Grace,
 of the Fall of Man and his Recovery, of the
 Law and Gospel, and of the Wisdom and
 Love of God in sending Jesus Christ to make
 attonement for sinners, and to bring in ever-
 lasting Righteousness. And not only so, but
 it evidently Prepares the way unto those *no-*
xious Opinions which at this day among many
 infect and corrupt Christian Religion, and fo-
 ment those Seeds of *Absyn* which spring up
 so fast as to threaten the overspreading of the
 whole Field of Christianity. For hence it will
 follow by an easie deduction, that every one
 may be saved, or attain unto his utmost happi-
 ness in his own Religion, be it what it will,
 whilst under any notion or conception he ac-
 know-

knowledgeth a Divine Being, and his own dependance thereon. And seeing that on this supposition it must be confessed, that Religion consists solely in *moral Honesty*, and a fancied *internal Piety* of mind towards the Deity, (for in nothing else can a centring of all Religions in the world unto a certain end be imagined) it follows, that there is *no outward Profession* of it indispensibly necessary, but that every one may take up, and make use of that which is best suited unto his interest in his present condition and circumstances. And as this being once admitted, will give the minds of men an *Indifferency*, as unto the several Religions that are in the world, so it will quickly produce in them a *Contempt* of them all. And from an entertainment of, or an indifferency of mind about these and the like *noysome opinions*, it is come to pass, that the Gospel after a continued Triumph for *sixteen hundred years* over Hell and the world, doth at this day in the midst of *Christendome* hardly with multitudes maintain ~~the~~ reputation of its truth and Divinity; and is by *many*, living in a kind of outward conformity unto the Institutes of Christian Religion, despised & laughed to scorn. But the proud and foolish *Atheistical Opiniators* of our dayes, whose sole design is to fortifie themselves by the darkness of their minds, against the charges of their own consciences upon their wicked and debauched conversations, do but expose themselves to the scorn of all sober and rational Persons.

For what are a few *obscure*, and for the most part *vitious Renegades*, in comparison of those great, wise, numerous and sober persons, whom the Gospel in its first setting forth in the world, by the *evidence* of its *truth*, and the *efficacy* of its *Power*, subdued and conquered? Are they as learned as the renowned *Philosophers* of those dayes, who advantaged by the endeavours and fruits of all the great *Wits of former Ages* had advanced solid rational Literature to the *greatest height* that ever it attained in this world; or possibly ever will do so; the minds of men having now something more excellent and noble to entertain themselves withall? Are they to be equalled in *wisdome* and *experience*, with those glorious *Emperors, Senators and Princes*, who then swayed the *Scepters* and affairs of the world? Can they produce any thing to *oppose unto the Gospel*, that is likely to influence the minds of men, in any degree comparably to the Religion of these great, learned, wise and mighty Personages, which having received by their Fathers, from *dayes immemorial*, was visibly attended with all *Earthly Gloryes and Prosperities*, which were accounted as the reward of their due observance of it? And yet whereas there was a *Conspiracy* of all those persons, and this influenced by the craft of *infernal Powers*, and managed with all that *wisdome, subtlety, power and cruelty*, that the nature of man is capable to exercise, on purpose to oppose the Gospel, and keep it from taking Root in the

the world ; yet by the glorious evidence of its *divine extract* and original wherewith it is accompanied, by the efficacy and power which God gave the Doctrine of it in and over the minds of men, all mannaged by the spiritual weapons of its Preachers, *which were mighty through God, to the pulling down of those strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted it self against the knowledge of God ;* it prevailed against them all, and subdued the world unto an acknowledgment of its truth, with the divine power and authority of its Author. Certainly there is nothing more contemptible, than that the *Indulgence of some inconsiderable Persons* unto their lusts and vices, who are void of all *those excellencies* in notion and practise, which have already been triumphed over by the Gospel, when set up in competition with it, or opposition unto it, should be once imagined to bring it into question, or to cast any disreputation upon it. But to treat of these things is not our present design ; we have only mentioned them *occasionally*, in the account which it was necessary we should give concerning our *Love to all men*, in general, with the grounds we proceed upon in the exercise of it.

2 Cor. 10

4, 5.

CHAP. III.

Nature of the Catholick Church. The first and principal Object of Christian Love. Differences among the Members of this Church, of what nature, and how to be managed. Of the Church Catholick as visibly professing: The extent of it, or who belongs unto it. Of Union and Love in this Church-state of the Church of England with respect herunto. Of particular Churches: Their institution: Corruption of that Institution. Of Churches Diocesan, &c. Of separation from corrupt particular Churches. The just Causes thereof, &c.

IN the second sort of Mankind before mentioned, consists the visible Kingdome of Christ in this world. This being grounded in his Death and Resurrection, and conspicuously settled by his sending of the Holy Ghost after his Ascension, he hath ever since preserved in the world, against all the contrivances of Satan, or oppositions of the Gates of Hell, and will do so unto the consummation of all things; For he *must* reign until all his enemies are made his Footstool. Towards these on all accounts our Love ought to be intense and fervent, as that which is the immediate Bond of our Relation

lation unto them, and Union with them. And this Kingdome or Church of Christ on the earth, may be, and is generally by all considered under a threefold notion. (1.) First, as therein, and among the Members of it, is comprized that *real living and spiritual body of his*, which is firstly, peculiarly, and properly the *Catholick Church* militant in this world. These are his Elect, Redeemed, justified, and sanctified ones, who are savingly united unto their Head, by the same quickning and sanctifying Spirit, dwelling in him in all fulness, and communicated unto them by him, according to his Promise. This is that *Catholick Church* which we profess to believe, which being hid from the eyes of men, and absolutely invisible in its *Mystrical Form*, or spiritual saving Relation unto the Lord Christ, and its Unity with him, is yet more or less alwayes visible, by that *Profession of Faith* in him, and obedience unto him, which it maketh in the world, and is alwayes obliged so to do. For *With the Heart man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Ro n. 10, 10. And this Church we believe to be so disposed over the whole world, that where-ever there are any *Societies* or *Numbers of men* who ordinarily profess the Gospel, and subjection to the Kingly Rule of Christ thereby, with an hope of eternal blessedness by his Mediation; we no way doubt but that there are among them *some* who really belong thereunto. In and by them doth the Lord Christ continually

fulfil and accomplish the *Promise of his Presence* by his Spirit with them that believe in his name; who are thereby Interested in all the Priviledges of the Gospel, and *Authorized* unto the Administration and Participation of all the Holy Ordinances thereof. And were it not that we ought not to *boast ourselves against others*, Especially such as have not had the Spiritual Advantages that the Inhabitants of these Nations have been intrusted withal, and who have been exposed unto *more violent Temptations* than they, we should not fear to say, that among those of all sorts who in these Nations hold the Head, there is probably according unto a Judgment to be made by the fruits of that Spirit which is savingly communicated unto the Church in this sense alone, a greater number of Persons belonging thereunto, than in any *One Nation or Church* under Heaven. The charge therefore of some against us, that we *Paganize the Nation*, by reason of some different Apprehensions from others, concerning the regular Constitution of *particular Churches* for the Celebration of Gospel Worship, is wondrous vain and ungrounded. But we know that men use such severe Expressions and Reflections, out of a *discomposed habit of Mind* which they have accustomed themselves unto, and not from a sedate Judgment and consideration of the things themselves. And hence they will labour to *convince others* of that, whereof, if they would put it unto a serious Tryal, they

they would never be able to convince themselves.

This then is that Church which on the account of their *Sincere faith and Obedience* shall be saved; and out of which, on the account of their *Profession*, there is no salvation to be obtained; which things are weakly and arrogantly appropriated unto any *Particular Church* or Churches in the World. For it is possible that men may be Members of it, and yet not belong or relate unto any particular Church on the Earth; and so it often falleth out as we could manifest by instances, did that work now lie before us. This is the Church which the Lord Christ loved and *Ephes. 3.* gave himself for it; that he might sanctifie and *26, 27,* cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that he might present it unto himself a Glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. And we must acknowledge that in all things *this is the Church*, unto which we have our first and Principal regard, as being the spring from which all other considerations of the Church do flow. Within the virge and compass of it, do we endeavour to be found, the End of the Dispensation of the Gospel unto Men being that they should do so. Neither would we to save our Lives, (*which for the Members of this Church and their* *1 Joh. 3.* good, we are bound to lay down, when *16.* justly called thereunto) wilfully live in the neglect of that Love rewards them or any of them,

them, which we hope God hath planted in our hearts, and made natural unto us, by that *one and self-same Spirit*, by whom the whole Myſtical Body of Chriſt is animated. We do confeſs, that becauſe the beſt of Men in this Life do *know but in part*, that all the Members of this Church are in many things liable to Error, miſtakes, and Miſcarriages: And hence it is, that although they are all *internally aſſed and guided by the ſame Spirit*, in all things abſolutely neceſſary to their Eternal ſalvation, and do all attend unto the ſame *Rule of the Word*, according as they apprehend the mind of God in it, and concerning it, have all for the Nature and Subſtance of it, the *ſame Divine Faith and Love*, and are all equally *united* unto their Head; yet in the Profeſſion which they make of the conceptions and perſwaſions of their minds, about the things revealed in the Scripture, there are, and always have been many Differences among them. Neither is it *morally poſſible* it ſhould be otherwiſe, whiſt in their Judgment and Profeſſion they are left unto the Ability of their own Minds, and Liberty of their Wills, under that great variety of the Means of Light and Truth, with other Circumſtances, whereinto they are diſpoſed by the Holy Wiſe Providence of God. Nor hath the Lord Chriſt *abſolutely* Promiſed that it ſhall be otherwiſe with them; but ſecuring them all by his Spirit in the *foundations of eternal Salvation*, he leaves them in other things

things to the exercise of mutual Love and forbearance; with a charge of Duty after a continual endeavour to grow up unto a perfect Union, by the improvement of the blessed Aids and Assistances which he is pleased to afford unto them. And those who by ways of Force would drive them into any other Union or Agreement, than their own Light and Duty will lead them into, do what in them lies to oppose the whole Design of the Lord Christ towards them, and his Rule over them. In the mean time it is granted, that they may fall into Divisions and *Schisms*, and mutual Exasperations among themselves, through the Remainders of Darkness in their minds, and the Infirmary of the flesh. And in such Cases *mutual judgings* and despisings are apt to ensue; and that to the Prejudice and great Disadvantages of that *Common faith* which they do profess. And yet notwithstanding all this (such cross intangled wheels are there in the course of our Nature) they all of them really value and esteem the things wherein they agree incomparably above those wherein they differ. But their valuation of the matter of their Union and Agreement is purely *spiritual*; whereas their Differences are usually influenced by *Carnal* and *Secular* Considerations, which have for the most part a sensible Impression on the Minds of poor Mortals. But so far as their Divisions and Differences are unto them unavoidable, the *Remedy* of farther Evils proceeding

Ro. 14.
3.

ceeding from them, is plainly and frequently expressed in the Scripture. It is *Love, Meekness*, forbearance, bowels of Compassion, with those other Graces of the Spirit, wherein our Conformity unto Christ doth consist, with a true understanding and due valuation of the *Unity of faith*, and the common Hope of Believers, which are the ways prescribed unto us, for the prevention of those Evils which, without them, our unavoidable Differences will occasion. And this *excellent way* of the Gospel, together with a Rejection of *evil surmises*, and a watchfulness over our selves against *irregular judging* and censuring of others, together with a peaceable walking in consent and Unity so far as we have attained, is so fully and clearly proposed unto us therein, that they must have their *Eyes blinded* by Prejudices and Carnal Interests, or some effectual working of the God of this world on their minds, into whose understandings the Light of it doth not shine with uncontrollable Evidence and Conviction. That the *Sons or Children of this Church of Jerusalem which is above, and is the Mother of us all*, should on the account of their various Apprehensions of some things relating to Religion or the worship of God, unavoidably attending their frail and imperfect condition in this world, yea or of any *Schisms* or Divisions ensuing thereon, proceeding from Corrupt and not thoroughly mortified Affections, be warranted to hate, judge, de-
spise

spise or contemn one another, much more to strive by *external force* to coerce, punish or destroy them that differ from them, is as foreign to the Gospel, as that we should believe in *Mahomet*, and not in *Jesus Christ*. Whatever share therefore we are forced to bare in Differences with, or Divisions from the Members of this Church, (that is, any who declare and evidence themselves so to be, by a *visible and regular Profession of faith and Obedience*) as it is a continual sorrow and trouble unto us; so we acknowledge it to be our Duty (and shall be willing to undergo any blame, where we are found defective in the Discharge of it, unto the utmost of our Power) to endeavour after the *strictest Communion* with them in all Spiritual things, that the Gospel doth require, or whereof our condition in this world is capable. In the mean time, untill this can be attained, it is our desire to mannage the *Profession of our own Light* and Apprehensions, without *Anger*, Bitterness, Clamours, Evil speaking, or any other thing that may be irregular in our selves, or give just cause of offence unto others. Our Prayers are also continually for the spiritual Prosperity of this Church, for its increase in *Faith and Holiness*, and especially for the healing of all breaches that are among them that belong thereunto throughout the World. And were we not satisfied that the *Principles* which we own, about the right *Constitution of the Churches of Christ*, and the

Wo ship

Worship of God to be observed in them, are singularly suited to the furtherance and Preservation of *Union* and due Order among all the members of this Church, we should not need to be excited by any unto their Renunciation. But our main design in all these things is, that both they, and we with them, may enjoy that peace which the Lord Christ hath *bequeathed* unto us, and walk in the way which he hath prescribed for us. And these things we mention, neither to *boast* of, nor yet to *justify* our selves, but only to acknowledge what is our conviction concerning our Duty in this matter. And might there any sedate, peaceable, *unprejudicate endeavours* be countenanced and encouraged, for the allaying of all occasional distempers, and the compoling of all differences among them who belong to this Church of Christ, so as that they might all of them (at least in these Nations) not only keep the unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, but also agree and consent in all wayes and Acts of Religious Communion; we doubt not but to manifest, that no rigid adherence unto the practise of any conceptions of our own, in things wherein the Gospel alloweth a *condescension* and forbearance, no delight in singularity, no prejudice against persons or things, should obstruct us in the promotion of it to the utmost of our power and ability. Upon the whole matter we own it as our duty to follow and seek after peace, unity, consent and agreement in holy worship, with all the member s

members of this Church, or those who by a regular profession manifest themselves so to be; and will with all readiness and alacrity *renounce* every principle or practise, that is either inconsistent with such communion, or directly or indirectly is in its self obstructive of it.

Secondly, The Church of Christ may be considered with respect unto its *outward Profession*, as constitutive of its *Being*, and the formal Reason of its denomination. And this is *the Church Catholick visible*, whereunto they all universally belong, who profess the invocation of the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours, under the limitations that shall be mentioned afterwards. And this is the *visible Kingdome of Christ*, which on the account of its profession, and thereby, is distinguished from that *world which lyeth in evil*, and is absolutely under the power of Satan: And so in common use, the *Church* and the *world* are contradistinguished. Yet on other accounts many who belong unto this Church, by reason of *some kind of profession* that they make, may justly be esteemed to be the *world*, or of it. So our Lord Jesus Christ called the generality of the *professing Church* in his time: *The world*, saith he, *hath me*; *John. 15.*
 And that we may know that he thereby intended the Church of the *Jewes*, besides that *18, 19.*
25. the circumstances of the place evince it, he puts it out of question by the Testimony which he produceth in the confirmation of his
 After.

Assertion concerning their unjust and causeless
 hatred ; namely, *It is written in their Law,*
they have hated me without a cause ; which
 Ps. 35. 19 being taken out of the *Psalms*, was part of the
 Law, or Rule of the *Judaical Church* only.
 Now he thus terms them, because the gene-
 rality of them, especially their *Rulers* , al-
 though they professed to know God, and to
 worship him according to his Word, and the
 Tradition of their Fathers, yet were not on-
 ly corrupt and wicked in their Lives, but
 also persecuted him and his Disciples, in whom
 the Power and Truth of God were manifest-
 ed beyond what they were able to bear. And
 hence a General Rule is established, that what
Profession soever any men do make of the
 Knowledge and Worship of God, to what
Church soever they do, or may be thought
 to belong, yet if they are wicked or ungodly
 in their Lives, and Persecutors of such as are
 better than themselves, they are really of
 the *World* , and with it will perish, with-
 out Repentance. These are they, who re-
 ceiving on them a *Form* or Delineation of
Godliness , do yet deny the Power of it ;
 from whom, we are commanded to turn a-
 way : But yet we acknowledge that there is
 a real difference to be made between them,
 who in any way or manner make *profession*
 of the Name of Christ with subjection un-
 to him, and that *Infidel world* , by whom
 the Gospel is totally rejected, or to whom
 it was never tendred.

In this *Catholick visible Church*, as comprehensive of all who throughout the world outwardly own the Gospel, there is an acknowledgment of *one Lord*, *one Faith*, *one Baptism*, which are a sufficient Foundation of that Love, Union and Communion among them, which they are capable of, or are required of them. For in the *joynt Profession* of the same Lord, Faith and Baptism, consists the Union of the Church, under this consideration, that is, as *Catholick and visibly professing*, and in nothing else. And hereunto also is required as the principle animating that Communion, and rendering it acceptable, *mutual Love* with its occasional Exercise; as a fruit of that Love which we have unto Jesus Christ, who is the Object of our Common Profession. And setting aside the consideration of them who openly reject the *Principal Fundamentals of Christian Religion*, (as denying the Lord Christ to be the Eternal Son of God, with the use and efficacy of his death, as also the Personal subsistence and Deity of the Holy Spirit,) and there is no known Community of these Professors in the world, but they own so much of the Truths, concerning *one Lord*, *one Faith*, and *one baptism*, as are sufficient to guide them unto Life and Salvation. And hereon we no way doubt, but that among them all there are some really belonging to the *Purpose of Gods Election*, who by the means that they do enjoy, shall at length be brought unto

everlasting Glory. For we do not think that God by his Providence would maintain the *Dispensation of the Gospel* in any Place, or among any People, among whom there are none whom he hath designed to bring unto the Enjoyment of Himself. For that is the Rule of his sending and continuing of it; whereon he enjoined the *Apostle Paul* to stay in such places where he *had much People* whom he would have to be converted. He would not continue from Generation to Generation, to scatter his *Pearls* where there were none but *rending Swine*, nor send *Fishers* unto waters wherein he knew there were nothing but *Serpents and Vipers*. It is true, the Gospel as preached unto many is only a *Testimony* against them, leaving them without excuse; and proves unto them a *Savour of Death unto Death*. But the first, direct, and principal Design of the Dispensation of it, being the Conversion of Souls, and their eternal salvation, it will not probably be continued in any Place, nor is so, where this *Design* is not pursued nor accomplished towards any. Neither will God make use of it any where merely for the Aggravation of Mens Sins and Condemnation; nor would his so doing consist with the Honour of the Gospel its self, or the Glory of that Love and Grace which it professeth to declare. Where it is indeed openly rejected, there that shall be the *Condemnation of Men*; but where it finds any admittance, there it hath somewhat

Acts. 18.
9, 10, 11.

Mat. 24.
14.
2 Cor. 2.
16.

of its genuine and proper work to effect. And the Gospel is esteemed to be in all Places dispensed and *admitted*, where the Scripture being received as the word of God, Men are from the Light, Truth, and Doctrine contained therein, by any means so far instructed, as to take upon them the profession of subjecting their Souls to Jesus Christ, and of observing the Religious Duties by him prescribed, in opposition to all false Religions in the World. Amongst all these the *Foundations of saving Faith* are at this day preserved: For they universally receive the whole *Canonical Scripture*, and acknowledge it to be the word of God, on such motives as prevail with them to do so sincerely. Herein they give a tacit consent unto the whole Truth contained in it; for they receive it as from God without exception or limitation. And this they cannot do without a *General Renunciation* of all the falsities and Evils that it doth condemn. Where these things concur, men will not believe nor practise any thing in Religion, but what they think *God requires of them*, and will accept from them. And we find it also in the Event, that all the Persons spoken of, where-ever they are, do universally profess, that they believe in the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and in his only and Eternal Son. They all look also for Salvation by him, and profess obedience unto him, believing that God raised him from the Dead. They believe in like manner

that the *Holy Spirit* is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, with many other sacred Truths of the same importance; as also, that *without Holiness no Man shall see God*. However therefore they are differenced and divided among themselves, however they are mutually esteemed *Hereticks* and *Schismaticks*, however through the Subtlety of Satan they are excited and provoked to *Curse* and *Persecute* one another, with wonderful Folly, and by an open contradiction unto other Principles which they profess; yet are they all Subjects of the Visible Kingdom of Christ, and belong all of them to the *Catholick Church*, making profession of the name of Christ in the World, in which there is Salvation to be obtained, and out of which there is none.

We take not any consideration at present of that absurd, foolish and *uncharitable Error*, which would confine the *Catholick Church* of Christ unto a particular Church of one single Denomination; or indeed rather unto a combination of some Persons, in an outward mode of Religious Rule and Worship; whereof the Scripture is as silent, as of things that never were, nor ever shall be. Yea we look upon it as intollerable Presumption, and the utmost height of *Uncharitableness*, for any to judge, that the constant Profession of the name of Christ, made by Multitudes of Christians, with the lasting miseries and frequent *Martyrdomes* which for his sake they undergo, should turn unto no advantage either of the
 Glory

Glory of God, or their own Eternal Blessedness, because in some things they differ from them. Yet such is the Judgment of those of the *Church of Rome*; and so are they bound to judge by the fundamental Principles and Laws of their Church Communion. But men ought to fear least they should meet with Judgment without Mercy, who have shewed no Mercy. Had we ever entertained a thought uncharitable to such a Prodigie of insolence, had we ever excluded any sort of *Christians* absolutely from an interest in the Love of God or Grace of Jesus Christ, or hopes of Salvation, because they do not, or will not comply with those ways and terms of outward Church Communion which we approve of, we should judge our selves as highly criminal in want of Christian Love, as any can desire to have us esteemed so to be. Jam. 2. 13.

It is then the universal *Collective Body* of them that profess the Gospel throughout the world which we own as the Catholick Church of Christ. How far the *Errors* in Judgment, or miscarriages in sacred worship, which any of them have superadded unto the Foundations of Truth which they do profess, may be of so pernicious a nature as to hinder them from an Interest in the Covenant of God, and so prejudice their Eternal Salvation, God only knows. But those *Notices* which we have concerning the Nature and will of God in the Scripture, as also of the Love, Care and Compassion of Jesus Christ, with the Ends of his

Mediation, do perswade us to believe, that where Men in sincerity do improve the Abilities and Means of the Knowledge of Divine Truth wherewith they are intrusted, endeavouring withall to answer their Light and Conventions with a suitable *Obedience*, there are but few Errors of the Mind, of so malignant a nature, as absolutely to exclude such Persons from an Interest in Eternal Mercy. And we doubt not, but that men out of a Zeal to the Glory of God, real or pretended, have imprisoned, banished, killed, burned others for such *Errors*, as it hath been the Glory of God to pardon in them, and which he hath done accordingly. But this we must grant, and do, that those whose *Lives and Conversions* are no way influenced by the Power of the Gospel, so as to be brought to some Conformity thereunto; or who under the Cover of a Christian Profession, do give themselves up unto *Idolary* and *Persecution* of the true Worshipers of God; are no otherwise to be esteemed but as Enemies to the Cross of

Heb. 12. Christ. For as without *Holiness* no Man
14. shall see God, so no *Idolater*, or *Murderer*,
Rev. 21. hath eternal Life abiding in him.

8. With respect unto these things we look up-
1 *Job.* 3. on the Church of England, or the Generali-
15. ty of the Nation professing Christian Religion, (measuring them by the Doctrine that hath been preached unto them, and received by them, since the Reformation,) to be as sound and healthful a part of the Catholick Church

Church as any in the world. For we know no Place, nor Nation, where the *Gospel* for so long a season hath been *preached* with more Diligence, Power, and Evidence for Conviction; nor where it hath obtained a greater Success or Acceptation. Those therefore who *perish amongst us*, do not do so, for want of Truth, and a right belief, or Miscarriages in Sacred worship, but for their own Personal Infidelity and Disobedience. For according to the Rules before laid down, we do not judge that there are any such *Errors* publickly admitted among them, nor any such Miscarriages in Sacred Administration, as should directly or absolutely hinder their eternal Salvation. That they be not any of them, through the Ignorance or Negligence of those who take upon them the conduct of their Souls, encouraged in a *State* or way of *Sin*, or deprived of due Advantages to farther their spiritual Good, or are lead into Practices in Religion neither acceptable unto God, nor tending to their own Edification, whereby they may be betrayed into Eternal Ruine, is greatly incumbent on themselves to consider.

Unto this *Catholick Church* we owe all Christian *Love*, and are obliged to exercise all the Effects of it, both towards the whole, and every Particular Member, as we have Advantage and Occasion. And not only so, but it is our Duty to live in constant *Communion* with it. This we can no otherwise

do, but by a Profession of *that Faith*, whereby it becomes the Church of Christ in the notion under Consideration. For any *failure herein*, we are not that we know of charged by any Persons of Modesty or Sobriety. The Reflections that have been made of late by some on the *Doctrines we teach or own*, do fall as severely on the Generality of the *Church of England*, (at least until within a few years last past) as they do on us. And we shall not need to owne any *special Concernment* in them, until they are publicly discountenanced by others. Such are the *Doctrines concerning Gods Eternal Decrees, Justification by Faith, the Loss of Original Grace, and the Corruption of Nature, the Nature of Regeneration, the Power and Efficacy of Grace in the Conversion of Sinners, that we say not of the Trinity and satisfaction of Christ*. But we do not think that the *Doctrines* publicly taught and owned among us, ever since the *Reformation*, will receive any great dammage by the impotent assaults of some few; especially considering their managment of those assaults, by *tales, railing, and rallyery*, to the lasting reproach of the Religion which themselves profess, be it what it will.

Thirdly, The Church of Christ, or the *visible Professors* of the Gospel in the world, may be considered as they are disposed of by Providence, or their own choyce, in *Particular Churches*. These at present are of many sorts,

or are esteemed so to be. For whereas the Lord Christ hath instituted sundry solemn Ordinances of Divine Worship to be observed joyntly by his Disciples, unto his honour and their edification, this could not be done but in such *Societies*, Communities, or Assemblies of them to that purpose. And as none of them can be duly performed, but in and by such *Societies*; so some of them do either express the Union, Love, and common Hope that is among them, or do consist in the means of their preservation. Of this latter sort are all the wayes whereby the *Power of Christ* is acted in the Discipline of the Churches. Wherefore we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, as the King, Ruler, and Lawgiver of his Church, hath ordained that all his Disciples, all persons belonging unto his Church in the former notions of it, should be gathered into distinct Societies, and become as Flocks of Sheep in several Folds, under the eye of their Great Shepherd, and the respective Conducts of those employed under him. And this conjunction of Professors in and unto particular Churches, for the celebration of the Ordinances of sacred Worship appointed by Christ, and the participation of his Institutions for their edification, is not a matter of accident, or meerly under the disposal of common Providence; but is to be an act in them of choice, and voluntary obedience unto the commands of Christ. By some *this Duty* is more expressly attended unto than by others; and

and by some it is totally neglected. For neither antecedently nor consequentially unto such their *Communion*, do they consider what is their duty unto the Lord Christ therein, nor what is most meet for their own edification: They go in these things with *others*, according to the custome of the Times and Places wherein they live, confounding their Civil and spiritual Relations. And these we cannot but judge to walk *irregularly*, through ignorance, mistakes, or prejudices: Neither will they in their least secular concernments, behave themselves with so much regardlesness or negligence. For however their Lot previously unto their own choyce, may be cast into any place or *Society*, they will make an after-judgment whether it be to their advantage, according to the Rules of prudence, and by that judgment either abide in their *first station*, or otherwise dispose of themselves. But a Liberty of this nature regulated by the Gospel, to be exercised in and about the great concernments of mens souls, is by many denied, and by most neglected. Hence it is come to pass, that the *Societies of Christians* are for the most part meer effects of their Political Distributions by Civil Lawes, aiming principally at other ends and purposes. It is not denied but that *Civil Distributions* of Professors of the Gospel, may be subservient unto the ends of Religious Societies and Assemblies: But when they are made a means to take off the minds of men from all regard

to the Authority of the Lord Christ, instituting and appointing such Societies, they are of no small disadvantage unto true Church-Communion and Love.

The Institution of these Churches, and the Rules for their disposal and Government throughout the world, are the same, *stable* and unalterable. And hence there was in the first Churches, planted by the Apostles, and those who next succeeded them in the care of that work, *great Peace, Union and Agreement*. For they were all gathered and planted alike, according unto the Institution of Christ; all *regulated* and ordered by the same common Rule. Men had not yet found out those things which were the *Causes of Differences* in after-Ages, and which yet continue so to be. Where there was any difference, it was for the most part on the account of some noysom foolish *Phantastical Opinions*, vented by Impostors, in direct opposition to the Scripture, which the generality of Christians did with one consent abhor. But on various occasions, and by sundry degrees, there came to be great variety in the conceptions of men about these *Particular Churches* appointed for the Seat and Subject of all Gospel Ordinances, and wherein they were authoritatively to be administered in the Name of Jesus Christ: For the Church in neither of the *former notions* is capable of such administrations. Some therefore rested in *particular Assemblies*, or such Societies, who did or might meet together under

Act. 14. der the guidance and inspection of their own
 23. Elders, Overseers, Guides, or Bishops : And
Chap. 20. hereunto they added the occasional meetings
 28. of those *Elders* and others, to advise and de-
1 Pet. 5. termine in common about the especial necessi-
 1, 2, 3. ties of any particular Church, or the general
Act. 15. 2 concernsments of more of them, as the matter
Phil. 1. 1. might require. These in name, and some kind
 of resemblance, are continued throughout
 the World in *Parochial* Assemblies. Others
 suppose a particular Church to be such a one
 as is now called *Diocesan*; though that name
 in its first use and application to Church Af-
 fairs was of a larger extent, than what it is
 now applyed unto, for it was of old the name
 of a *Patriarchal* Church. And herein the sole
 Rule, Guidance, and *Authoritative inspection*
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 Churches, assembling for sacred Worship
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 distinctly, is committed unto *one man*, whom
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Bishop. For the joyning of others with him,
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 cise of Jurisdiction, hinders not, but that the
 sole *Ecclesiastical Power of the Diocess*, may be
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 thers do either act in his name, or by power
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 any Authority *meerly Ecclesiastical* ; howe-
 ver in common use, what they exercised
 may be so termed. But the nature of such
 Churches, with the *Rule and Discipline* exer-
 cised

cised in them and over them, is too well known to be here insisted on. Some rest not here; but unto these *Diocesan* adde *Metropolitall* Churches, which also are esteemed particular Churches, though it be uncertain by what warrant, or on what grounds. In these *one person* hath in some kind of Resemblance, a respect unto, and over the *Diocesan Bishops*, like that which they have over the Ministers of Particular Assemblies. But these things being animated and regulated by certain Arbitrary Rules and *Canons*, or Civil Laws of the Nations, the due bounds and extent of their power cannot be taken from any *Nature* or Constitution peculiar unto them. And therefore are there, where-ever they are admitted, various *Degrees* in their Elevation. But how much or little the Gospel is concerned in these things, is easie for any one to judge. Neither is it by wise men pretended to be so, any further, than that as they suppose, it hath left such things to be ordered by humane wisdom, for an expediency unto some certain ends. One or more of these *Metropolitall Churches*, have been required in latter Ages, to constitute a *Church National*. Though the truth is, that *Apellation* had originally another occasion; whereunto the invention of these *Metropolitall Churches* was accommodated: For it arose not from any respect unto Ecclesiastical Order or Rule, but unto the supream *Political Power*, whereunto the Inhabitants of such a *Nation* as gives
Deno-

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 Churches, with the *Rule and Discipline* exer-
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cised in them and over them, is too well known to be here insisted on. Some rest not here; but unto these *Diocesan* adde *Metropolitcal* Churches, which also are esteemed particular Churches, though it be uncertain by what warrant, or on what grounds. In these *one person* hath in some kind of Resemblance, a respect unto, and over the *Diocesan Bishops*, like that which they have over the Ministers of Particular Assemblies. But these things being animated and regulated by certain Arbitrary Rules and *Canons*, or Civil Laws of the Nations, the due bounds and extent of their power cannot be taken from any *Nature* or Constitution peculiar unto them. And therefore are there, where-ever they are admitted, various *Degrees* in their Elevation. But how much or little the Gospel is concerned in these things, is easie for any one to judge. Neither is it by wise men pretended to be so, any further, than that as they suppose, it hath left such things to be ordered by humane wisdom, for an expediency unto some certain ends. One or more of these *Metropolitcal Churches*, have been required in latter Ages, to constitute a *Church National*. Though the truth is, that *Apellation* had originally another occasion; whereunto the invention of these *Metropolitcal Churches* was accommodated: For it arose not from any respect unto Ecclesiastical Order or Rule, but unto the supream *Political Power*, whereunto the Inhabitants of such a *Nation* as gives
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Denomination to the Church, are Civilly subject. Hence that which was *Provincial* at the first Erection of this Fabrick, which was in the *Romish Empire*, whilst the whole was under the power of one Monarch, became *National* when the several Provinces were turned into Kingdomes, with absolute Sovereign power among themselves, wholly independent of any other. And he who in his own Person and Authority, would erect an *Ecclesiastical Image* of that demolished Empire, will allow of such *Provincial Churches* as have a dependance upon himself; but cares not to hear of such *National Churches*, as in their first notion include a Sovereign Power unto all intents and purposes within themselves. So the *Church of England* became *National* in the dayes of King *Henry the Eighth*, which before was but *Provincial*.

Moreover, the consent of many had prevailed, that there should be *Patriarchal Churches*, comprehending under their Inspection and Jurisdiction many of these *Metropolitick* and *Provincial Churches*. And these also were looked on as Particular; for from their first invention there having been *four* or *five* of them, no one of them could be imagined to comprize the Catholick Church; although those who presided in them, according to the pride and vanity of the declining Ages of the Church, stiled themselves *Oecumenical* and *Catholick*. Things being carried thus far, about the Fifth and Sixth Century of years after

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ter Christ, *One* owned as Principal or chief of this latter sort, set up for a Church denominated *Papal*, from a Title he had appropriated unto himself. For by Artifices innumerable he ceased not from endeavouring to subject all those other Churches and their Rulers unto himself: And by the advantage of his *Pre-eminence* over the other *Patriarchs*, as theirs over *Metropolitans*, and so downwards, whereby all Christians were imagined to be comprized within the Precincts of some of them, he fell into a claim of a Sovereignty over the whole Body of Christianity and every particular member thereunto belonging. This he could have had no pretence for, but that he thought them cast into such an *Order*, as that he might possess them on the same grounds, on which that Order it self was framed: For had not *Diocesan*, *Metropolitcal*, and *Patriarchal* Churches made way for it, the thought of a *Church Papal*, comprehensive of all believers, had never befallen the minds of *mind*. For it is known, that the prodigious Empire which the *Pope* claimed and had obtained over Christianity, was an emergency of the contests that fell out among the Leaders of the greater sorts of Churches, about the Rights, Titles, and Pre-eminences among themselves, with some other occasional and intestine Distempers. Only he had one singular advantage for the promotion of his Pretense and desire. For whereas this whole *consignation of Churchis* into all these Storyes, in the

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the top whereof he emerged and lifted up himself, was nothing but an accommodation of the Church and its Affairs unto the Government of the *Roman Empire*, or the setting up of an *Ecclesiastical Image* and Representation of its Secular Power and Rule, the centring therein of all subordinate Powers and Orders in *one Monarch*, inclined the minds of men to comply with his Design, as very reasonable. Hence the principal Plea for that Power *over the whole Church* which at present he claims, lyes in this, that the Government of it ought to be *Monarchial*. And therein consists a chief part of the mystery of this whole work; that whereas this Fabrick of Church Rule was erected in imitation of, and compliance with the *Roman Empire*; that he could never effect his Sovereignty whilst that Empire stood in its strength and union, under the command of one or more Emperours by consent; yet when that Empire was destroyed, and the Provinces thereof became parcelled out unto several Nations, who erected absolute independent Sovereignties among themselves, he was able by the Reputation he had before obtained, so to improve all *emergencies* and advantages, as to gather all these new Kingdomes into one *Religious Empire* under himself, by their common consent. In the mean time, by the Original *Divisions of the Empire*, and the Revolutions that happened afterwards amongst the Nations of the *World*, the greatest number of Christians
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were wholly unconcerned in this new *Church* *Soveraignty* which was erected in the Western Provinces of that Empire. So was the Mystery of Iniquity consummated; for when as the *Pope*, to secure his new *Acquisitions*, endeavoured to empale the Title and Priviledges of the *Catholick Church*, unto those Christians which professed Obedience unto himself, unto an exclusion of a greater number; there ensued such a confusion of the *Catholick*, and a *particular Church*, as that both of them were almost utterly lost.

Concerning these several sorts of *conceited particular Churches*, it is evident that some of them, as to their nature and kind, have no Institution in, nor warrant from the Scripture; but were *Prudential Contrivances* of the men of the Dayes wherein they were first formed; which they effected by various degrees, under the conduct of an Apprehension, that they tended unto the increase of Concord and Order among Christians. Whether really and effectually they have attained *that end*, the event hath long since manifested. And it will be one day acknowledged, that no *Religious Union or Order* among Christians will be lasting, and of spiritual use or advantage unto them, but what is appointed and designed for them by Jesus Christ. The truth is, the mutual intestine Differences and Contests among them who first possessed the *Rule of such Churches*, about their Dignities, Pre-eminences, Priviledges, and Jurisdictions.

risdictions, which first apparently let in Pride, Ambition, Revenge, and Hatred, into the Minds and Lives of Church-Guides, ~~loss~~ ^{the} the peace of Christendome; and the degeneracy of the ^r *Successors* more and more, into a secular Interest and worldly frame of Spirit, is one great means of continuing us at a loss for its retrieval.

How far any man may be obliged in Conscience unto *communion* with these Churches in those things wherein they are such, and as such behave themselves in all their Rule and Administrations, may be enquired into by them who are concerned. What respect we have unto them, or what *Duty* we may owe them, as they may in any place be established by the Civil Laws of the Supream Magistrate, is not of our present consideration. But whereas in their *Original* and *Rise*, they have no other warrant, but the *Prudential contrivance* of some men, who unquestionably might be variously influenced by *corrupt Prejudices* and Affections in the finding out and manangement of their Inventions; what ground there is for holding a Religious communion with them, and wherein such communion may consist, is not easie to be declared. For the notion that the Church-communion of the generality of Christians and Ministers, consists only in a *quiet subjection* unto them, who by any means may pretend to be set over them, and claim a right to rule them, is fond and impious. In the mean time,

time, we wholly deny, that the Mistakes or Disorders of Christians in complying with, or joyning themselves unto such Churches as have no warrantable institution, ought to be any cause of the diminishing of our Love towards them, or of withdrawing it from them. For notwithstanding their *Errors* and Wanderings from the Paths of Truth in this Matter, they do, or may continue interested in all that Love which is due from us unto the Church of Christ, upon the double account before insisted on: For they may be yet persons *born of God, united unto Christ*, made partakers of his Spirit, and so belong to the *Church Catholick, Mystick*, which is the first principal Object of all Christian Love and Charity. The *Errors* wherewith they are supposed to be overtaken, may befall any persons under those Qualifications, the admittance of them, though *culpable*, being not inconsistent with a state of Grace and acceptance with God. And they may also by a due profession of the fundamental Truths of the Gospel, evince themselves to be professed Subjects of the visible Kingdom of Christ in the world, and so belong to the *Church Catholick visibly professing*; under which notion, the Disciples of Christ are in the next place commended unto our Love. And it is the fondest imagination in the world, that we must of necessity want Love towards all those with whom we cannot join in all acts of Religious Worship; or that there

need be any *Schisme* between them and us, on the sole account thereof, taking *Schisme* in the common received notion of it. If we bear unkindness towards them in our minds and hearts, if we desire, or seek their hurt, if we *persecute* them, or put them to trouble in the world for their Profession, if we pray not for them, if we pity them not in all their Temptations, Errors, or Sufferings, if we say unto any of them *when naked, be thou clothed; and when hungry, be thou fed;* but relieve them not according unto our abilities and opportunities; if we have an aversion to their Persons, or judge them any otherwise than as they cast themselves openly and visibly under the sentence of Natural Reason, or Scripture-Rule, we may be justly thought to fail in our Love towards them. But if our Hearts condemn us not in these things, it is not the difference that is or may be, between them and us, about *Church-Constitutions* or *Order*, that ought be a cause, or can be an evidence of any want of Love on our parts: There will indeed be a *distinct and separate* practice in the things wherein the difference lies, which in it self, and without other *avoidable evils*, need not on either side to be *Schismatical*. If by censures or any kind of power, such Churches or Persons would force us to submit unto, or comply with such things or ways in Religious Worship, as are contrary unto our Light, and which they have no *Authority* from the
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Lord Christ to impose upon us, the whole state of the Case is changed, as we shall see afterwards.

As for those *Particular Churches*, which in any part of the world, consist of Persons assembling together for the worship of God in Christ, under the Guidance of their own *Lawful Pastors and Teachers*, we have only to say, that we are full well assured, that where-ever *two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ*, there he is present with them; and farther than this, there are very few concerning whom we are called to pass any other Censure or Judgment. So we hope it is with them, and so we pray that it may be. And therefore we esteem it our *Duty* to hold that Communion with all these Assemblies, when called thereunto, which is required of any Christians in the like cases and Circumstances. Unless we are convinced that, with respect unto *such or such Instances*, it is the Mind of Christ that neither among our selves, nor in Conjunction with others, nor for the sake of present Communion with them, we should observe them in his worship, we judge our selves under an Obligation to make use of their Assemblies in all Acts of Religion, unto our Edification, as occasion shall require. But where the *Authority of Christ* in the things of sacred worship doth intervene, all other considerations must be discarded; and a compliance therewith will secure us from all irregular Events.

It must be acknowledged that many of these Churches have wofully *degenerated*, and that any of them may so do, both from their Primitive Institution, and also the sole Rule of their worship. And this they may do, and have done, in such *various Degrees* and ways, as necessarily requires a great *variety* in our Judgments concerning them, and our Communion with them. The whole Christian world gives us Instances hereof at this Day; yea, we have it confirmed unto us in what is recorded concerning sundry Churches mentioned in the *Scripture* its self. They were newly planted by the *Apostles* themselves, and had Rules given by them, to attend unto, for their Direction. And besides, they were obliged in all Emergencies to enquire after and receive those *Commands* and Directions, which they were enabled infallibly to give unto them. And yet notwithstanding these great Advantages, we find that sundry of them were suddenly fallen into *sinful neglects*, disorders, and miscarriages, both in Doctrine, Discipline, and worship. Some of these were reprov'd and reformed by the

Rev. 2. 3.

Great Apostle, in his Epistles written unto them for that End: And some of them were rebuked and threatned by the Lord Christ himself immediately from Heaven. That in process of Time they have increased in their *Degeneracy*, waxing worse and worse, their present state and Condition in the world, or the Remembrance of them which are now not

at all, with the severe dealings of God with them in his Holy wise Providence, do sufficiently manifest. Yea some of them, though yet continuing under other Forms and shapes, have by their Superstition, false worship, and *Express Idolatry*, joyned with wickedness of Life, and Persecution of the true worshippers of Christ, as also by casting themselves into a new worldly Constitution, utterly foreign unto what is appointed in the Gospel, abandoned their Interest in the State and Rights of Churches of Christ. So are sundry faithful Citties become Harlots; and where Righteousness inhabited, there dwells Persecuting Murderers. Such Churches were planted of Christ wholly noble vines, but are degenerated into those that are bitter and wild. Whatever our Judgment may be concerning the Personal condition of the Members of such apostatized Churches, or of any of them; all Communion with them, as they would be esteemed the Seat of Gospel Ordinances, and in their pretended Administrations of them, is unlawful for us; and it is our indispensable Duty to seporate from them. For whatever Indifferency many may be growing into, in matter of outward worship, which ariseth from ignorance of the Respect that is between the Grace and Institutions of Christ, as that, from an Apprehension that all internal Religion consists in *Moral Honesty* only; yet we know not any other way whereby we may approve our selves faithful in our

Mat. 28. Profession, but in the Observance of all what-
 20. ever Christ hath commanded, and to abstain
 from what he condemns. For both our Faith
 and Love, whatever we pretend, will be
John 15. found vain, if we endeavour not to keep his
 10, 14. Commandments.

Such was the state of things in the Church
 of *Israel* of old, after the Defection under
Jeroboam. It was no more a true Church,
 nor any Church at all, by virtue of positive
 Institution: For they had neither *Priests*,
 nor *Sacrifices*, nor any Ordinances of Pub-
 lik worship, that God approved of. Hence
 it was the Duty of all that feared God in the
Ten Tribes, not to joyn with the Leaders and
 Body of the People in their worship; as also
 to observe those Sacred Institutions of the
 Law, which were forbidden by them, in the
 Order that they should not go up to *Jerusa-*
 2 *Chron.* lem, but attend unto all their Sacred Solemn-
 11. ties in the Places where the *Calves* were set up.
Chap. 13. Accordingly many of the most Zealous Pro-
 1 *Kings* fessors among them, with the *Priests* and *Le-*
 12. *Chap.* 13. *vites*, and with a great Multitude of the Peo-
 ple, openly seperated from the Rest, and
 joyned themselves unto *Judah* in the worship
 of God, continued therein. Others a-
 mongst them secretly in the worst of times pre-
 served themselves from the *Abominations* of
 the whole People. In like manner under the
 new Testament, when some have deserved the
Rev. 18. Title of *Babylon*, because of their Idolatry,
 4. false worship and Persecution, we are com-
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manded to come out from among them; in an open visible professed Separation, that we be not Partakers of their Sins, and Plagues. But this Judgment we are not to make, nor do make concerning any, but such as among whom *Idolatry* spreads its self over the Face of all their Solemn Assemblies, and who joyn thereunto the *Persecution* of them who desire to worship God in Spirit and in Truth. The Constitution of such Churches, as to their being acceptable Assemblies of worshipers before God, is lost and dissolved: Neither is it Lawful for any *Disciple of Christ* to partake with them in their Sacred Administrations; For so to do, is plainly to disowne the Authority of Christ, or to set up that of wicked and Corrupt men above it.

Yet all this hinders not but that there may in such *Apostatical Churches* remain a profession of the fundamental Truths of the Gospel. And by vertue hereof, as they maintain the interest of *Christs visible Kingdome* in the world; so we no way doubt but that there may be many amongst them, who by a saving faith in the Truths they do profess, do really belong to the *Mistical Church* of Christ.

An instituted Church therefore may by the *Crimes* and wickedness of its Rulers, and the generality of its Members, and their Idolatrous Administrations in holy things, utterly destroy their *Instituted Estate*, and yet not presently all of them cease to belong unto the Kingdome of Christ. For we cannot say, that
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those things which will certainly *annul Church Administrations*, and render them abominable, will absolutely destroy the salvation of all *individual persons* who partake in them; and many may secretly preserve themselves from being defiled with such abominations. So in the height of the Degeneracy and Apostacy of the *Israelitish Church*, there were seven thousand who kept themselves pure from *Baalish Idolatry*, of whom none were known to *Elijah*. And therefore did God still continue a respect unto them as his people, because of those *secret ones*, and because the Token of his Covenant was yet in their flesh; affording unto them an extraordinary Ministry by his Prophets, when the ordinary by Priests and Levites was utterly ceased. This we are to hope concerning every place where there is any Profession made of the Name of Christ; seeing it was the Passion of *Elijah* which caused him to oversee so great a *Remnant* as God had left unto himself in the Kingdome of *Israel*. And from his example we may learn, that good men may sometimes be *more severe in their censures for God*, than he will be for himself.

Moreover, such as were *baptized* in those Churches, were not baptized into them as particular Churches, nor *initiated* into them thereby: But the Relation which ensued unto them thereon, was unto the *Catholick Church visible*, together with a separation from the *Infidel world*, lying wholly in darkness

ness and evil, by a dedication unto the Name of Christ. Upon a personal avowment of that Faith whereinto they were baptized, they became compleat Members of that Church. Whatever state they are hereby admitted into, whatever benefit or priviledge they are personally interested in, they lose them not by the miscarriage of that particular Church whereunto they do relate : Yea, losing the whole advantage of an *instituted Church-state*, they may still retain whatever belongs unto their Faith and Profession. Were *Baptisme* only an Initiation into a Particular Church, upon the failure of that Church, Baptism as to all its benefits and Priviledges, must cease also. We do therefore own, that amongst those whose Assemblies are rejected by Christ, because of their false worship and wickedness, there may be persons truly belonging to the Mystical Church of God, and that also by their Profession are a portion of his Visible Kingdome in the World. How far they do consent unto the *Abominations* of the Churches whereunto they do belong, how far they have Light against them, how far they do bewaile them, how far they repent of them, what God will bear withall in them, we know not, nor are called to judge. Our *Love* is to be towards them as persons relating unto Jesus Christ in the capacity mentioned; but all *Communion* with them in the Acts of false Worship is forbidden unto us. By vertue also of that *Relation* which they still continue un-

to Christ and his Church as believers, they have Power, and are warranted, (as it is their Duty) to *reform themselves*, and to joyn together anew in Church Order, for the due celebration of Gospel Ordinances, unto the Glory of Christ, and their own edification. For it is fond to imagine, that by the sins of others, any Disciples of Christ in any place of the world, should be deprived of a *Right* to perform their Duty towards him, when it is discovered unto them. And these are our thoughts concerning such Churches, as are openly and visibly *Apostatical*.

Again, There are *Corruptions* that may befall or enter into Churches that are not of so heinous a nature, as those before insisted on: Especially if, as it often falls out, the whole *Lump be not leavened*; if the whole Body be not infected, but only some Part or Parts of it, which others more sound do resist, and give their Testimony against: And these may have none of the pernicious consequences before mentioned. Thus many *Errors* in Doctrines, *Disorders* and *Miscarriages* in sacred Administrations, irregular walking in conversation, with neglect or abuse of Discipline in Rulers, may fall out in some Churches, which yet may be so far from *evacuating their Church state*, as that they give no sufficient Warrant unto any person, immediately to leave their Communion, or to separate from them. The Instances that may be given of the failings of some of the *Primitive Churches*

Churches, in all these things, with the consideration of the *Apostolical Directions* given unto them on such Occasions, render this Assertion evident and incontrollable. Nor do we in the least approve of their practise (if any such there be, that are considerable) who upon every failing in these things in any Church, think themselves sufficiently warranted, immediately of their own minds, to depart from its Communion. Much more do we *condemn them* who suffer themselves in these things to be guided by their own surmises and misapprehensions. For such there may be, as make their own hasty conceptions to be the Rule of all Church Administrations, and Communion; who unless they are in all things pleased, can be *quiet* no where. Wherefore when any Church, whereof a man is by *his own consent* antecedently a Member, doth fail in part or in whole from any of those Truths which it hath professed, or when it is overtaken with a neglect of Discipline, or irregularities in its administration, such a one is to consider, that he is placed in his present state by divine Providence, that he may orderly therein endeavour to put a stop unto such Defections, and to exercise his *charity*, Love and Forbearance towards the persons of them whose Miscarriages at present he cannot Remedy. In such cases there is a large and spacious Field, for *Wisdom, Patience, Love and prudent Zeal* to exercise themselves. And it is

a most perverse Imagination, that *Seperation* is the only cure for Church-disorders. All the *Gifts and Graces* of the Spirit, bestowed on Church-Members, to be exercised in their several stations at such a season, all *Instructions* given for their due improvement unto the good of the whole; the Nature, Rules and Laws of all Societies, declare that all other *Remedies* possible and lawful, are to be attempted, before a Church be finally deserted. But these Rules are to be observed, provided alwayes, that it be judged unlawful for *any Persons*, either for the sake of Peace, or Order, or Concord, or on any other consideration, to join actually in any thing that is *sinful*, or to profess any Opinion which is contrary to *Sound Doctrine*. For the form of wholesome words, which we are bound to hold fast on all Emergencies. And farther, if we may suppose, as sure enough we may, that such a Church so corrupted shall *obstinately persist* in its Errors, Miscarriages, Neglects, and Mal-administrations; that it shall refuse to be warned or admonished, or being so by any means, shall wilfully reject and despise all Instruction; that it will not bear with them that are yet sound in it, whether Elders or Members, in peaceable Endeavors to reduce it unto the order of the Gospel, but shall rather hurt, persecute and seek their trouble for so doing, whereby their *Edification* comes continually to be obstructed, and their Souls to be hazarded

zarded through the loss of Truth and Peace; we no way doubt but that it is lawful for such persons to withdraw themselves from the Communion of such Churches, and that without any apprehension that they have absolutely *lost their Church-state*, or are totally rejected by Jesus Christ. For the *means* appointed unto any end, are to be measured and regulated according unto their usefulness unto that end. And let mens present Apprehensions be what they will, it will one day appear, that the end of all Church-Order, Rule, Communion and Administrations, is not the *Grandeur* or secular Advantages of some few, not *outward Peace* and Quietness, unto whose preservation the *Civil Power* is ordained; but the Edification of the Souls of men in Faith, Love, and Gospel-Obedience. Where therefore these things are so disposed of and mannaged, as that they do not regularly further and promote that *End*, but rather obstruct it, if they will not be reduced unto their due Order and Tendency, they may be laid aside, and made use of in another way. Much more may any refuse the communion of such Churches, if they *impose on them* their Corruptions, Errors, Failings and Mistakes, as the condition of their Communion: For hereby they directly make themselves *Lords* over the Faith and Worship of the Disciples of Christ, and are void of all Authority from him in what they so do or impose. And it is so far, that any
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mens *withdrawing of themselves* from the communion of such Churches, and entering into a way of Reformation for their own good, in obedience to the Laws of Christ, should infer in them a want of Love and Peaceableness, or a Spirit of Division, that to do otherwise, were to divide from Christ, and to cast out all true Christian Love, embracing a Cloud of slothful negligence and carelessness in the great concernments of the Glory of God, and their own Souls, in the room thereof. We are neither the Authors nor the Guides of our own Love: He who implants and worketh it in us, hath given us Rules how it must be exercised, and that on all emergencies. It may work as regularly by sharp *cutting Rebukes*, as by the most silken and compliant expressions; by manifesting an aversation from all that is *evil*, as by embracing and approving of what is *good*. In all things and cases it is to be directed by the Word: And when under the pretence of it we leave that Rule, and go off from any Duty which we owe immediately unto God, it is *Will, Pride, and Self-conceit* in us, and not Love. And among all the Exhortations that are given us in the Scripture unto Unity, and Concord, as the Fruits of Love, there is not *one* that we should agree or comply with any in their sins or evil practices. But as we are commanded in our selves to abstain *from all appearance of evil*, so are we forbidden a participation

icipation in the sins of other men, and all fellowship with *unfruitful works of darkness*: Our Love towards such Churches is to work by Pity, Compassion, Prayer, Instructions, which are due means for their healing and recovery; not by *consent* unto them, or *communion* with them, whereby they may be hardened in the Error of their way, and our own Souls be subverted: For if we have not a due respect unto the Lord Christ, and his Authority, all that we have, or may pretend to have unto any Church, is of no value. Neither ought we to take into consideration any terms of Communion, whose foundation is not laid in a regard thereunto.

Moreover, (as hath been declared) there is no such society of Christians in the world, whose Assemblies, as to *Instituted Worship*, are rejected by Christ, so that they have a Bill of *Divorce* given unto them by the Declaration of the Will of the Lord Jesus to that purpose in the Scripture; but that until they are utterly also as it were extirpate by the Providence of God (as are many of the Primitive Plantations) we are perswaded of them, that there are yet some *secret hidden ones* among them, that belong unto the purpose of Gods Grace. For we do judge that where-ever the Name of Jesus Christ is called upon, there is salvation to be obtained; however the wayes of it may be obstructed unto the most, by their own Sins and Errors. They may also retain that Profession which

distinguisheth them from the *Infidel* world. In these things we are still to hold communion with them; and on these accounts is our Love to be continued unto them. Some kind of communion we may hold with them, that that are of *no Instituted or Particular Churches*, or whose Church-State is rejected, even as a person excommunicated is to be *admonished as a Brother*. And some kind of communion we may lawfully refuse with some true Churches; Instances whereof shall be given afterwards.

There is therefore no necessity that any should deny all them to be *true Churches*, from whom they may have just reason to withdraw their communion. For such as are so, may require such things thereunto, as it is not lawful for them to accept of, or submit unto. What Assemblies of Christians we behold visibly worshipping God in Christ, we take for granted to be *true visible Churches*. And when we judge of our own communion with them, it is not upon this Question, whether they are *true Churches or no*, as though the determination of our practice did depend solely thereon: For as we are not called to judge of the *being of their Constitution*, as to the substance of it, unless they are openly judged in the Scripture, as in the case of Idolatry and Persecution persisted in; so a determination of the Truth of their constitution, or that they are true Churches, will not presently resolve us in our Duty as
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to communion with them, for the Reasons before given. But in such a case, two things are by us principally to be considered.

1. That nothing *sinful* in it self, or unto us, be required of us as the condition of communion. 2. That we may in such Churches obtain the immediate end of their *Institution*, and our Conjunction with them, which is our *Edification* in Faith, Love and Obedience.

And the things whereof we have discoursed, comprize our Thoughts concerning *those Societies* of Christians; whose degeneracy from their primitive Rule and Institution is most manifest and notorious. Whilst there is any *Profession of the Gospel*, any subjection of Souls unto Jesus Christ avowed, or any expectation of help from him continued among them, we cannot but hope that there are in all of them, at least *some few Names* that are written in the *Lambs Book of Life*, and which shall be saved eternally: For as a *Relation unto a particular visible Church* walking according to the Order and Rule of the Gospel, is the Duty of every Believer to give himself up unto; as that which is a means appointed and sanctified to the furtherance of his Edification and Salvation; so where it cannot be obtained through invincible outward *Impediments*, or is omitted through ignorance of Duty, or is on just Causes refused where opportunities make a tender of it; or where the being and benefit,

of it is lost through the Apostatie of those Churches whereunto any persons did belong, the *utter want* of it, and that *always*, is not such as necessarily infers the eternal loss of their Souls who suffer under it.

Other Churches there are in the world, which are not evidently guilty of the *Enormities* in Doctrine, Worship and Discipline, before discoursed of. These all we judge to be *true Churches* of Christ; and do hope that his promised presence is with them in their Assemblies. Answerable hereunto is our Judgment concerning their *Officers* or Rulers, and all their Sacred Administrations. It becomes us to think and believe, that the *one* have Authority from Christ; and that the *other* are accepted with him: For it is most unwarrantable rashness and presumption, yea an evident fruit of Ignorance, or want of Love, or secular private Interest, when, upon lesser Differences men judge *Churches* to be no *true Churches*, and their Ministers to be no *true Ministers*, and consequently all their Administrations to be invalid. So do some judge of Churches, because they have no *Bishops*; and so do more of others, because they have none. But the *Validity* or *Invalidity* of the Ordinances of Christ, which are the Means of Union and Communion with him unto all his Disciples, depend not on the determination of things highly disputable in their Notion, and not inconsistent with true Gospel-Obedience in
their

their Practice. And we are unduly charged with other Apprehensions. God forbid that any such thought should ever enter into our hearts, as though the Churches *constituted in all things* according unto our Light, and the Rules we apprehend appointed in the Scripture for that purpose, should be the only true Churches in the world. They do but out of design, endeavour to expose us to popular envy and hatred, who inveat and publish such things concerning us, or any of us: But whatever be the Judgment of others *concerning us*, we intend not to take from thence any such provocation as might corrupt our Judgments *concerning them*; nor to relieve our selves by returning the like censures unto them, as we receive from them: Scripture Rule and Duty must in these matters regulate our thoughts on all occasions. And whilst we judge others to be true Churches, we shall not be much moved with their judgment that we are none, because we differ from them: We stand to the judgment of Christ and his Word. We cannot but judge indeed that *many Churches* have missed, and do miss in some things the *precise Rules* of their due constitution and walking; that many of them have added useless, *superfluous Rites* to the Worship of God among them; that there is in many of them a sinful neglect of Evangelical Discipline, or a carnal Rule erected in the stead of it; that Errors in Doctrines of importance and danger, are prevalent in sundry

dry of them ; that their Rulers are much influenced by a spirit of bitterness and envy against such as plead for Reformation beyond their measure or interest ; yet that hereupon they should all or any of them immediately *forfeit their Church-State*, so as to have no lawful Ministers, nor acceptable sacred Administrations, is in it self a false Imagination, and such as was never by us entertained.

In particular, as to those Churches in *Europe*, which are commonly called *Reformed* ; we have the same thoughts of them, the same Love towards them, the same readiness for communion with them, as we would desire any Disciples of Christ in the world to have, bear, or exercise towards our selves. If we are found negligent in any *Office of Love* towards them, or any of their Members, in compassion, help or assistance, or such supplies in outward or inward things, as we have opportunity or ability for, we are willing to bear the guilt of it as our Sin, and the *reproach* of it as our shame. And herein we desire to *suffil the Royal Law*, according to the *Scripture*, *thou shalt love thy Neighbor as thy self*. The same we say concerning all the Churches in *En Land* of the same mould and constitution with them, especially if it be true which some say, that *Parochial Churches* are under a force and power, whereby they are enjoined the practice of sundry things, and forbidden the performance of others, wherein the compliance of some

is not over-voluntary, nor pleasing to themselves. Neither is there a *Nullity* or *Invalidity* in the Ordinances administered in them, any otherwise, than as some render them ineffectual unto themselves by their unbelief. And this is the *Pagarizing* of *England*, which some of us are traduced for. We believe, that among the visible professors in this Nation, there is as great a number of sincere Believers as in any Nation under Heaven; so that in it are treasured up a considerable portion of the *invisible Mystical Church* of Christ. We believe, that the Generality of the Inhabitants of this Nation, are by their Profession constituted an eminent part of the *Kingdome of Christ* in this world. And we judge not, we condemn not those who walking according to their Light and Understanding in *Particulars*, do practise such things in the Worship of God, as we cannot comply withal. For we do not think that the things wherein they fail, wherein they miss, or *outrage the Rule*, are in their own nature absolutely destructive of their particular Church-state. And what more can reasonably be required of us, or expected from us in this matter, we know not. The causes of the *Distance* that doth remain between us & them, shall be afterwards enquired into. For our Duty in particular presential communion, at the celebration of the same *individual Ordinances*, with such Churches as are remote from us in *Asia* or *Africa*, we shall we hope be directed to

determine aright concerning it, when we are called thereunto. In the mean time, what are our Thoughts concerning them, hath been before declared: To love them as *Subjects of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ* in the world, to pray for them, that they may have all needful supplies of Grace, and the Holy Spirit, from above, that God would *send out his Light and Truth* to guide them in their Worship and Obedience, and to help them in things spiritual and temporal, as we have opportunity, is the Sum of the Duty which is required in us towards them. Those we are more concerned in, who are within the Lines of our ordinary Communication, among whom we walk and converse in the world: Unto any of these it is in the *Liberty and power* of every Believer to join himself by his own consent: And no more is required hereunto, in the present constitution of Churches among our selves, but that a man *remove his habitation*, to comply with his own desires herein: And this choice is to be regulated by a judgment, how a man may best improve and promote his own Edification. We see not therefore how any man with the least pretence of *Sobriety or Modesty*, can charge us with the want of an esteem and valuation of *Evangelical Unity*: For we embrace it on all the Grounds, that it is in the Gospel recommended unto us. And we do know within what narrow bounds the *Charity and Unity* of some are confined, who yet

yet advantage themselves by a noise of their pretence. But that we do not in the least disturb, break, or dissent from the *Catholick Church*, either as it is *invisible*, in its internal form, by Faith and the Renovation of the Holy Ghost; or as *visibly professing* necessary Fundamental Truths of the Gospel, we have sufficiently evinced. And the Principles laid down concerning particular Churches, Congregations, Assemblies or *Parishes*, have not as yet been detected by any to spring from want of Love, or to be obstructive of the exercise of it. Having therefore thus briefly given some account of what we conceive to be our duty in relation unto the *whole Church* of God, we can with confidence and much assurance of mind, own as dear a valuation of Love, Unity and Peaceableness in the Profession of the Gospel, as any sort of Professors whatever. And we are persuaded that *our Principles* do as much tend and conduce unto the improvement of them, as any that are, or can be proposed unto that end. For we either do, or are in a readiness to embrace every thing or way, that the Lord Christ hath appointed, or doth bless thereunto.

We doubt not, as hath been before acknowledged, but that there have been many *failings* and *sinful miscarriages* among all sorts of Professors, who *separate*, or are rather driven from the present Publick worship. There is no question but that in them all, there are some

some remainders of the *bitter Root* of corrupt affections, which under the various temptations and provocations they have been exposed unto, hath brought forth fruit of an unpleasant relish. It is no new thing that *irregular prejudices* should be found acting themselves in Professors of the Gospel : It hath been so among them from the Beginning. And we hope that where there is, or hath been any guilt of this nature, that the Reproofs which have been publickly given unto it (with what Spirit or Intention soever mannaged) may be useful to the amendment of them who have offended. But for our own Parts, we must bear this Testimony unto our sincerity, that we not only condemn, but abhor all *evil surmises* among Professors, all rash and *uncharitable censures*, all causeless averations of Mind and Affections, all *strife, wrath, anger, and debate*, upon the account of different apprehensions and practises in and about the concerns of Religious worship. Much more do we cast out all thoughts of *judging mens eternal state* and condition, with respect unto such differences ; nor do we, nor dare we, give countenance unto any thing that is in the least really opposite to love, Peace, Unity, or Concord, amongst the Disciples of Christ. And as we shall not excuse any of those *Extravagancies* and intemperate Heats, in words or otherwise, which some it may be have been guilty of, who until their Repentance must bear their own Judgment ; so we will
nor

not make a recharge on others who differ in Perswasion from us, of the same or the like crimes; nor indeed need we so to do, their *Principles* and *Practises*, contrary unto all Christian Love and Charity, being written as with the beams of the Sun. And we do not complain of our Lot in the world, that the appearance of such things in any of us would be esteemed a scandalous crime, which others that condemn them in us, indulg in themselves without the least check or controul. The Law of this condition is put upon us by the Profession which we do avow. Only we are not willing that any should make advantage against us by their Pleas, for Love, Unity, and Concord, as if indeed *they were for Peace*, but that we *make our selves ready for war*. Could they convince us that we come behind them in the valuation and seeking after these things by all ways and means blessed by Christ to that purpose, we should judge our selves with a severity at least commensurate to the utmost they are able to exercise against us, whilst free from malice and evil designs. Only we must adde, that there is no true *measure* of Love, to be taken by the Accessions that men can make towards them who depart from Truth. If it were so, those must be judged to abound most with it, who can most comply with the practises of the Church of Rome. But we are perswaded that such *Discourses*, with the application of them unto those who differ from their Authors, do proceed from *sincerity*

ry in them; only, as we fear, somewhat leavened with an apprehension that their Judgment and Practices being according unto truth ought to be the *Standard and Measure* of other mens; perhaps no less sincere and confident of the Truth than themselves, though differing from them. And hence it is unhappily fallen out, that in the Reproofs which some do mannage on the foundations mentioned, and in the way of their managment, many do suppose that there is as great an appearance, if not evidence of *evil surmises*, ungrounded temerarious censures, of self-conceit and elation of mind, of hard thoughts of, undue charges on, and the contempt of others, and in all of a want of real love, condescension, and compassion, as in any things that are true, and to be really found among Professors blamed by them. For these things, both as charged and recharged, have a double appearance. Those from whom they proceed look on them in the *light of that sincerity and integrity* which they are conscious of to themselves, wherein they seem amiable, useful, and free from all offence; whereas others that are concerned viewing of them in the *disordered Reflections* of their opposition unto them, and the disadvantage which they undergo by them, do apprehend them quite of another nature. And it is a matter of trouble unto us, to find that when some are *severely handled* for those Principles and ways wherein they can, and do commend their Consciences unto God, and thereby

hereby apprehending that their Intentions,
 purposes, Principles and Affections, are in-
 dustry traduced and perverted, they fall
 with an *equal severity* on them by whom they
 are reprov'd, though their Reproofs proceed
 from an *equal Sincerity* unto what themselves
 profess, and expect to be believed in. Espe-
 cially are such *mutual Reflections* grievous
 and irksome unto Men, when they apprehend
 that in them, or by them, Professed Friends
 do industriously expose them to the contempt
 and wrath of Professed Adversaries.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Want of Love and Unity among Christians justly complained of. Causes of Divisions and Schisms. 1. Misapprehensions of Evangelical Unity. Wherein it doth truly consist. The ways and means whereby it may be obtained and preserved. Mistakes about both. 2. Neglect in Churches to attend unto known Gospel-Duty. Of preaching unto Conversion and Edification. Care of those that are really Godly. Of Discipline: How neglected, how corrupted. Principles seducing Churches and their Rulers into miscarriages. 1. Confidence of their place. 2. Contempt of the people. 3. Trust unto worldly Grandeur. Other causes of Divisions. Remainders of corruption from the General Apostacy. Weakness and Ignorance. Of Readiness to take offences. Remedies hereof. Pride. False Teachers.

UPon the whole matter, it is generally acknowledged that there is a great Decay of Love, a great want of Peace and Unity among Professors of the Gospel in the world. And it is no less evident, nor less acknowledged

knowledged, that these things are frequent-
 ly commanded and enjoyned unto them in
 the Scripture. Might they be obtained it
 would greatly further the *Ends of the Gospel*,
 and answer the mind of Christ: And their
Loss is obstructive unto the one, and no less
 dishonourable unto that Profession which is
 made of the Name of the other. For the *Di-*
visions of Christians (occasioned chiefly by
 false notions of Unity, and undue means of
 attaining it) are the chief cause of Offences
 unto them who are yet strangers from Chri-
 stianity. The *Jews* object unto us the *Wars* a-
 mong Christians, which they suppose shall have
 no place under the Kingdom and Reign of the
true Messiah. And we have been reproached
 with our intestine Differences by *Gentiles* and
Mahumetans. For those who never had either
 Peace or Love, or Unity among themselves,
 do yet think meet to revile us with the want
 of them; because they know how highly we
 are obliged unto them. But any Men may be
 justly charged with the neglect of that *Duty*
 which they profess, if they be found defective
 therein. Under the sad Effects of the want of
 these things we may labour long enough, if
 we endeavour not to take away the *Causes* of
 it. And yet in the entrance of our Disquili-
 tion after them we are again entangled. *Chri-*
stians cannot come to an Agreement about
 these Causes, and so live under the severity
 of their Effects, as not being able to conclude
 on a Remedy. The multitude of them is
 here

here divided, and *one cryeth one thing, another another*: Most place the Cause of all our Differences in a *dissent from themselves*, and their Judgments: Yea they do so apparently, who yet disavow their so doing. And it may be here expected that we should give some account of our thoughts as to the *Causes* of these Differences whereof we also have *now* complained, so far as they are contrary to the nature, or Obstructive of the Ends of the Gospel. We shall therefore briefly endeavour the satisfaction of such as may have those Expectations. Particular Evils which contribute much unto our *Divisions*, we shall not insist upon; much less shall we reflect upon, and aggravate the failings of others, whether Persons or Societies. Some of the Principal and more General Reasons, and *Causes* of them, especially amongst *Protestants*, it shall suffice us to enumerate.

The Principal *Cause* of our Divisions and *Schisms* is no other than the Ignorance or Misapprehension that is among Christians, of the *true nature of that Evangelical Unity*, which they ought to follow after, with the ways and means whereby it may be attained and preserved. Hence it is come to pass, that in the greatest Pleas for *Unity*, and endeavour's after it, most men have pursued a shadow, and fought uncertainly, as those that beat the Air. For having lost the very *notion of Gospel Unity*, and not loving the thing its self, under what terms soever proposed unto them, they

they consigned the Name of it unto, and cloathed with its ornaments and Priviledges a vain *Figment* of their own, which the Lord Christ never required, nor ever blessed any in their Endeavours to attain. And when they had changed the *End*, it was needful for them also to change the *Means* of attaining it; and to substitute those in their Room which were suited to the new Mark and Aim they had erected. Farther to evidence these things we shall give some account of the *Nature of Evangelical Unity*, the means of attaining it; with the false notion of it that some have embraced, and the corrupt means which they have used for the compassing of the same.

First, that Unity which is recommended unto us in the Gospel is *spiritual*; and in that which is purely so, lies the Foundation of the whole. Hence it is called the *Unity of the Spirit*, which is to be kept in the bond of Peace; because *there is one Body, and one Spirit, whereby that Body is animated*. Thus all true Believers become *one in the Father and the Son*; or perfect in one. It is their Participation of, and quickening by the same Spirit that is in Christ Jesus, whereby they become his Body, or Members of it, *even of his flesh and of his bones*; that is, no less really Partakers of the *same Divine Spiritual Nature* with him, than Eve was of the Nature of *Adam*, when she was made *of his flesh and his bones*. The real Union of all true Believers unto the Lord Christ as their Head, wrought by his Spirit

Ephes. 4.

3, 4.

John 17.

21, 22.

Eph. 5. 30

2 Pet. 1. 4

Gen. 2. 23

which dwelleth in them, and communicates of his Grace unto them, is that which we intend. For as hereby they become one with, and *in* him, so they come to be one among themselves, as his *Body*; and all the *Members of the Body* being many are yet but one Body; wherein their oneness among themselves doth consist. The *Members of the Body* have divers forms or shapes, divers uses and Operations, much more may be *diversly cloathed* and adorned; yet are they one Body still, wherein ~~this~~ Unity doth consist. And it were a ridiculous thing to attempt the appearance of a dead useles Unity among the Members of the Body, by *cloathing* of them all in the same kind of Garments or Covering. But granting them their *Unity* by their Relation unto the Head, and thence to one another, unto the Constitution of the whole; and their different Forms, shapes, Uses, Operations, ornaments, all tend to make them serviceable in their Unity unto their proper Ends. And saith the Apostle, *as the Body is one, and hath many Members, and all the*
 1 Cor. 12. *Members of that one Body being many are one*
 12, 13. *body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*
 And he doth elsewhere so describe this Fundamental Unity of Believers in one Body, under and in dependance on the *same Head*, as to make it the only means of the usefulness
 and

and Preservation of the whole. They grow up *Eph. 4.*
 into him in all things which is the Head even *15, 16.*

Christ: From whom the whole Body, faste-
 ned together and compacted by that which every
 joyn supplyeth, according to the effectual wor-
 king in the measure of every part, maketh in-
 crease of the Body unto the Edifying of its self in
 Love. The conjunction of all the Members

into one Body, their mutual usefulness unto
 one another, the Edification of the whole,
 with its increase, the due exercise of Love,

(which things contain the whole nature, and
 the utmost Ends of all Church-Communion)

do depend meerly and solely upon, and flow
 from, the Relation that the Members have

to the Head, and their Union with him. He
 speaketh again to the same purpose in the re-
 proof of them who hold not the Head, from

which all the Body by joyns and bands having
 nourishment ministred and knit together, increa-
 seth with the increase of God. This is the Founda-
 tion of all Gospel Unity among Believers,

whereunto all other things which are required
 unto the compleating of it, are but accessory;

nor are they without this, of any value or
 acceptation in the sight of God. Whatever

Order, Peace, Concord, Union in the Church,
 any one may hold or keep, who is not inter-
 ested herein, he is but like a Stone in a buil-
 ding, laid it may be in a comely order, but

not cemented and fixed unto the whole, which
 renders its station useless to the building, and
 unsafe unto its self: or like a dead, mortified

part

avoiding

part of the Body; which neither receives any *vital Influence* from the Head, nor administers nourishment unto any other part. Now it cannot be denyed but that in the Contests that are in the world about *Church Union and Divissions*, with what is pleaded about their nature and Causes, there is little or no consideration had thereof. Yea those things are principally insisted on, for the constituting of the *One*, and the ~~according~~ of the *Other*, which cast a neglect, yea a contempt upon it. It is the *Romanists* who make the greatest outcries about Church Union, and who make the greatest *Advantage* by what they pretend so to be. But hereunto they contend expressly on the one side, that it is indispensibly necessary that all Christians should be *subject to the Pop: of Rome*, and united unto him; and on the other, that it is not necessary at all that any of them be *spiritually* and *savingly united unto Christ*. Others also place it in various Instances of Conformity unto, and Compliance with the Commands of Men, which if they are observed, they are wondrous cold in their enquiries after this *Relation unto the Head*. But the truth is, that where any one is interested in this Foundation of all Gospel Unity, he may demand *Communion* with any Church in the world, and ought not to be refused, unless in Case of some present *Offence* or scandal. And those by whom such Persons are *rejected from Communion*, to be held on Gospel terms, on the account

account of some Differences not entrenching on this Foundation, do exercise a kind of *Church Tyranny*, and are guilty of the *Schism* which may ensue thereon. So on the other side, where this is *wanting*, mens compliance with any other terms or conditions that may be proposed unto them, and their obtaining of Church-Communion thereon, will be of little Advantage unto their Souls.

Secondly, Unto this *Foundation of Gospel Unity* among Believers, for and unto the due improvement of it, there is required an *Unity of Faith*; or of the belief and Profession of the same Divine Truth. For as there is *one Lord*, so also *one Faith* and *one Baptism* unto Believers. And this ariseth from, and followeth the other. For those who are so united unto Christ, are *all taught of God* to believe the Truths which are necessarily required thereunto. And however by the Power of Temptation they may fall in it, or from it for a season, as did *Peter*, yet through the Love and care of Jesus Christ, they are again recovered. Now unto this *Unity of Faith* two things are required. First, a precise and expresse Profession of the *Fundamental Articles* of Christian Religion. For we outwardly hold the Head by a consent unto the *form of wholesome words* wherein the Doctrine of it is contained. Of the Number and Nature of such *Fundamental Truths*, whose expresse Acknowledgment belongs unto the Unity of Faith, so much hath been discoursed by others,

as that we need not add any thing thereunto. The sum is, that they are but *few*, plainly delivered in the Scripture; *evidencing* their own necessity; all conducing to the begetting and increase of that Spiritual Life, whereby we live unto God. Secondly, It is required hereunto, that in other things and Duties, every man *be fully perswaded in his own mind*, and walking according to what he hath attained; do follow Peace and Love, with those who are otherwise perswaded than he is. For the *Unity of Faith* did never consist in the same precise Conceptions of all revealed Objects: Neither the nature of Man, nor the means of Revelation, will allow such a Unity to be morally Possible. And the figment of supplying this variety by an *implicit Faith*, is ridiculous. For herein Faith is considered as *professed*; and no man can *make profession* of what he knoweth not. It is therefore confession and *mutual forbearance* whereby the *Unity of Faith* consisting in the joynt belief of necessary Truths, is to be reserved with respect unto other things about which Differences may arise.

Yet is not this so to be understood, as though Christians, especially *Ministers of the Gospel*, should content themselves with the knowledg of such *Fundamentals*, or confine their Scripture inquiries unto them. What-ever is written in the Scripture, is *written for our instruction*; and it is our duty to search diligently into the whole Counsel of God therein

Rom. 14.

5.

Phil. 3. 15

1 Cor. 10.

12.

therein revealed: Yea to inquire with all diligence, in the use of all means, and the improvement of all advantages, with fervent supplications for light and aid from above, into the whole *Mystery of the will of God*, as revealed in the Scripture, and all the Parts of it, is the principal duty that is incumbent on us in this world. And those who take upon them to be *Ministers* and *Instructors* of others, by whom this is neglected, who take up with a superficial knowledge of general Principles, and those such for the most part as have a coincidence with the Light of Nature, do but betray the souls of those over whom they usurp a charge, and are unworthy of the Title and Office which they bear. Neither is there any thing implied in the means of preserving the *Unity of Faith*, that should hinder us from explaining, confirming and vindicating, any Truth that we have received, wherein others differ from us; provided that what we do, be done with a spirit of meekness and love: Yea, our so doing is one principal means of *ministering nourishment* unto the Body, whereby the whole is increased as with the increase of God.

But in the Room of all this, what contentings, fightings, destructions of men, body and soul, upon variety of Judgments about sacred things, have been introduced by the *Craft of Satan*, and the carnal interest of men of corrupt minds, is known to all the world. Thirdly, There is an *Unity of Love*, that belongs

belongs unto the Evangelical Unity which we are in the description of. For *Love is the bond of perfection*; that whereby all the Members of the Body of Christ are knit together among themselves, and which renders all the other ingredients of this Unity useful unto them. And as we have discoursed of the nature of this *Love* before, so the exercise of it, as it hath an actual influence into *Gospel Unity* among Christians, may be reduced unto two Heads. For, First, it worketh effectually according to the measure of them in whom it is, in the *Contribution of supplies of Grace and Light*, and helps of obedience, unto other Members of the body. Every one in whom this Love dwelleth, according to his Ability, Call, and Opportunities, which make up his *measure*, will communicate the spiritual supplies which he receiveth from the Head Christ Jesus unto others, by Instructions, Exhortations, Consolations and Example, unto their Edification. This he will do in *Love*, and unto the ends of Love; namely, to testify a joynt Relation unto Christ the Head of all, and the increase of the whole by supplies of life from him. Instead hereof, some have invented *bonds of Ecclesiastical Unity*, which may outwardly bind men together in some appearance of order, whilst in the meantime they live in *envy, wrath, and malice*, biting and devouring one another; or if there be *any thing of Love* among them, it is that which is meerly *natural*, or carnal and sensual, working by a joynt consent

consent in delights and pleasure, or at best in *Civil things*, belonging unto their conversation in this world. The love that is among such persons *in this world*, is of the world, and will perish with the world. But it is a far easier thing to satisfy Conscience with a pretence of *preserving Church Unity*, by an acquiescency in some outward Rules and Constitutions, wherein mens minds are little concerned, than to attend diligently unto the due exercise of this *Grace of Love*, against all Oppositions and Temptations unto the contrary: For indeed the exercise of this Love requires a sedulous and painful labour, *Heb.* 6. 10. But yet this is that alone which is the *Bond of Perfection* unto the Disciples of Christ, and without which, all other pretences or appearances of Unity, are of no value with him. Secondly, This Love acts it self by *forbearance and condescension* towards the Infirmities, mistakes, and faults of others; wherein, of what singular use it is for the Preservation of Church Peace, and Order, the Apostle at large declares, *1 Cor.* 13.

Fourthly, The Lord Christ by his Kingly Authority hath instituted *Orders for Rule, and Ordinances for Worship*, to be observed in all his Churches. That they be attended unto, and celebrated in a due manner, belongs unto the *unity* which he requires among his Disciples. To this end he communicates supplies of spiritual ability and wisdom, or the Gifts of his Spirit, unto the Guides and Rulers

Mat. 28.

19, 20.

Ephes. 4.

8, 9, 10,

11, 12,

13.

lers of his Churches, for their administration unto edification. And hereon, if a submission unto his Authority be accompanied with a due attendance unto the Rule of the Word, no such *variety* or difference will ensue, as shall impeach that Unity which is the Duty of them all to attend unto.

John 17. In these things doth consist that *Evangelical Church Unity* which the Gospel recommends unto us, and which the Lord Christ prayed for with respect unto all *that should believe on his Name*. One Spirit, one Faith; one Love, one Lord, there ought to be in and unto them all. In the possession of *this Unity*, and no other, were the first Churches left by the *Apostle*: And had they in succeeding Generations continued according to their Duty, in the preservation and liberty of it, all those *scandalous Divisions* which afterwards fell out among them on the account of *Pre-eminences*, Jurisdictions, Liturgies, Rites, Ceremonies, violently or fraudulently obtruded on their Communion, had been prevented.

2 Cor. 10. The *ways* and *means* whereby this Unity
4, 5. may be obtained and preserved amongst Christians, are evident from the Nature of it: For whereas it is *Spiritual*, none other are suited thereunto; nor hath the Lord Christ appointed any other, but his Spirit and his

Mat. 28. Word. For to this end doth he promise the
20. presence of his Spirit among them that be-
John 14. lieve, unto the consummation of all things.
16. And

And this he doth, both as to *lead* and *guide* them into all *Truth* necessary unto the Ends mentioned; so to assist and help them in the orderly performances of their Duties in and about them. His *Word* also, as the Rule which they are to attend unto, he hath committed unto them; and other ways and means for the compassing of this end, besides the due improvement of spiritual Assistances, in a compliance with the holy Rule, he hath not designed or appointed.

This is that *Gospel-Unity* which we are to labour after; and these are the means whereby we may do so. But now through the mistake of the minds of men, with the strong influence which carnal and corrupt Interests have upon them, we know how it hath been despised, and what hath been set up in the room thereof; and what have been the *means* whereby it hath been pursued and promoted. We may take an Instance in those of the *Church of Rome*. No sort of Christians in the world (as we have already observed) do at this day more *pretend* unto *Unity*, or more press the necessity of it, or more fiercely judge, oppose and destroy others for the breach of it, which they charge upon them; nor more prevail or advantage themselves by the pretence of it, than do they: But yet notwithstanding all their Pretences, it will not be denied, but that the *Unity* which they so make their boast of, and press upon others, is a thing utterly *forreign* to the *Gospel*, and de-

destructive of that Peace, Union and Concord among Christians, which it doth require. They know how highly Unity is *commended in the Scripture*, how much it is to be prized and valued by all true Believers, how acceptable it is to Jesus Christ, and how severely they are condemned who break it, or despise it: These things they press, and plead, and make their advantage by. But when we come to enquire what it is that they intend by *Church-Unity*, they tell us long Stories of *Subjection unto the Pope*, to the Church in its Dictates and Resolutions, without farther examination, meerly because they are theirs. Now these things are not only of *another nature* and kind than the Unity and Concord commended unto us by Jesus Christ, but perfectly inconsistent with them, and destructive of them. And as they would impose upon us a *corrupt confederacy* for their own secular Advantage, in the room of the spiritual Unity of the Gospel; so it was necessary that they should find out means suitable unto its Accomplishment and Preservation; as distant from the means appointed by Christ, for the attaining of *Gospel-Union*, as their carnal Confederacy is from the thing its self. And they have done accordingly: For the *enforcing* men by all wayes of deceit and outward violence, unto a compliance with, and submission unto their Orders, is the great Expedient for the establishment and preservation of their perverse Union, that they have
fixed

fixed on. Now that this *Fictitious Unity*, and corrupt carnal pursuit of it, have been the greatest occasion and causes of begetting, fomenting and continuing the *Divisions* that are among Christians in the world, hath been indeniably proved by Learned men of all sorts. And so it will fall out, where-ever any reject the Union of Christ's Institutions, and substitute in the room thereof, an Agreement of their own Invention; as his will be utterly *lost*, so they will not be able to retain their own.

Thus others also not content with those bounds and measures which the Gospel hath fixed unto the *Unity of Christians* and Churches, will have it to consist almost wholly in an *outward Conformity* unto certain Rites, Orders, Ceremonies, and Modes of Sacred Administrations, which themselves have either invented and found out, or do observe and approve. Whoever dissents from them in these things, must immediately be branded, as a *Schismatick*, a Divider of the *Churches Unity*, and an enemy unto the Peace and Order of it. Howbeit, of *Conformity* unto such Institutions and Orders of men, of *Uniformity* in the observation of such external Rites in the worship of the Church, there is not one word spoken, nor any thing of that nature intimated, in all the *Commands for Unity* which are given unto us, nor in the Directions that are sanctified unto the due preservation of it. Yet such an *Uniformity*,
being

being set up in the room of Evangelical Unity and Order; Means suited unto the preservation of it, but really destructive of that whose name it beareth, and whose Place it possesseth, have not been wanting. And it is not unworthy consideration, how men endeavour to deceive others, and are deceived themselves, by manifold *Equivocations* in their arguing about this Matter. For first, they lay down the *necessity of Unity* among Christians, with the evil that is in Breaches, Divisions and Schismes; which they prove from the Commands of the one, and the Re-proofs of the other, that abound in the Scripture. Then, with an easie deduction, they prove that it is a Duty incumbent on all Christians in their several Capacities to *observe, keep, further, and promote this Unity, and to prevent, oppose, resist and avoid all Divisions that are contrary thereunto*. If so, the *Magistrate* must do the same in his place and capacity. Now seeing it is his *Office*, and unto him of God it is committed, to exercise his power, in Laws and Penalties, for the promoting of what is good, and the punishing of what is contrary thereunto, it is his *Duty to coerce, restrain and punish all those who oppose, despise, or any way break or disturb the Unity of the Church*. And this Ratiocination would seem *reasonable*, were it not doubly defective: For first, the *Unity* intended in the first Proposition, whose necessity is confirmed by Scripture-Testimonies, is
utterly

utterly lost before we come to the Conclusion; and the *outward Uniformity* mentioned, is substituted in the room thereof. And hereby, in the second place, are they deceived to believe, that *external force and penalties* are a means to be used by any for the attaining or preserving of *Gospel-Unity*. It is not improbable indeed, but that it may be suited to give countenance unto that *external Uniformity* which is intended; but that it should be so unto the promotion of *Gospel-Union* among Believers, is a weak imagination. Let such persons keep themselves and their Argument unto *that Union* which the Scripture commends amongst the Disciples of Christ, and his Churches, with the means fitted and appointed unto the preservation of it, and they shall have our compliance with any Conclusion that will thence ensue.

Herein therefore lies the *Fundamental Cause of our Divisions*, which will not be healed, until it be removed and taken out of the way. Leave Believers or Professors of the Gospel unto their Duty in seeking after *Evangelical Unity* in the use of other *Means* instituted and blessed unto that End; impose nothing on their Consciences or Practice under that *Name* which indeed belongs not thereunto; and although upon the Reasons and Causes afterwards to be mentioned, there may *for a season* remain some Divisions among them, yet there will be a *way of healing* continually ready for them, and agreed upon by them

as such. Where indeed men propose unto themselves *different Ends*, though under the *same Name*; the use of the *same Means* for the compassing of them, will but encrease their variance. As where some aim at *Evangelical Union*, and others at an *External Uniformity*, both under the name of *Unity* and *Peace*. in the use of the *same Means*, for these *Ends*, they will be more divided among themselves. But where the *same End* is aimed at, even the *debate of the Means* for the attaining of it, will insensibly bring the Parties at difference into a *Coalition*, and work out in the issue a compleat *Reconciliation*. In the mean time, were Christians duly instructed, how, many *lesser Differences* in Mind, Judgment and Practice, are really consistent with the Nature, Ends, and genuine Fruit of the *Unity* that Christ requires among them, it would undoubtedly prevail with them so to mannage themselves in their Differences by mutual forbearance and condescension in Love, as not to contract the guilt of being Disturbers or Breakers of it. For suppose the Minds of any of them to be invincibly prepossessed with the *Principles* wherein they differ from others; yet all who are *sincere* in their Profession, cannot but rejoyce to be directed unto such a *Mannagery* of them, as to be preserved from the guilt of dissolving the *Unity* appointed by Christ to be observed. And to speak plainly, among all the Churches in the world which are free from Idolatry

dolatry and Persecution, it is not *different Opinions*, or a difference in Judgment about revealed Truths, nor a different practice in sacred Administrations, but *Pride, Self-interest, Love of Honour, Reputation, and Dominion*, with the influence of Civil or Political Intrigues and Considerations, that are the true cause of that defect of *Evangelical Unity* that is at this day amongst them. For set them aside, and the real differences which would remain, may be so managed in *Love, Gentleness and Meekness*, as not to interfere with that *Unity* which Christ requireth them to preserve: Nothing will from thence follow, which shall impeach their common Interest in *one Lord, one Faith, one Love, one Spirit*, and the Administration of the same Ordinances according to their Light and Ability. But if we shall cast away this *Evangelical Union* among the Disciples and Churches of Christ, if we shall break up the Bounds and Limits fixed unto it, and set up in its place a compliance with, or an agreement in the Commands and Appointments of men, making their Observations the Rule and measure of our *Ecclesiastical Concord*, it cannot be, but that innumerable and endless Divisions will ensue thereon. If we will not be contented with the Union that Christ hath appointed, it is certain we shall have none in this world. For concerning that which is of *men finding out*, there have been and will be Contentions and Divisions; whilst the

are any on the one side who will endeavour its imposition ; and on the other, who desire to preserve their Consciences entire unto the Authority of Christ in his Laws and Appointments.

There is none who can be such a *Stranger in our Israel*, as not to know that these things have been the great Occasion and Cause of of the Divisions and Contentions that have been among us, near an hundred years, and which at this day make our Breaches wide like the Sea, that they cannot be healed. Let therefore those who have *Power and Ability*, be instrumental to restore to the minds of men the true *Notion and Knowledge* of the Unity which the Lord Christ requireth among his Churches and Disciples ; and let *them* be left unto that Liberty which he hath purchased for them, in the pursuit of that *Unity* which he hath prescribed unto them ; and let us all labour to stir up those Gracious Principles of Love and Peace, which ought to guide us in the use of our Liberty, and will enable us to preserve Gospel-Unity, and there will be a greater Progress made towards Peace, Reconciliation and Concord, amongst all sorts of Christians, than the *spoiling of the Goods*, or imprisoning of the Persons of Dissenters, will ever effect. But it may be such things are required here unto, as the world is yet scarce able to comply withal. For whilst men do *hardly believe* that there is an efficacy and power accompanying the

the Institutions of Christ, for the compassing of that whole end which he aimeth at and intendeth; whilst they are *unwilling* to be brought unto the constant exercise of that spiritual Diligence, Patience, Meekness, Condescension, Self-Denial, Renunciation of the world, and Conformity thereunto, which are indispensibly necessary in Church-Guides, and Church-Members, according to their measure, unto the attaining and preservation of Gospel-Unity; but do satisfie themselves in the disposal of an *Ecclesiastical Union*, into a subordination unto their own secular Interests, by external force and power; we have very *small expectation of success* in the way proposed. In the mean time we are herewith satisfied, Take the Churches of Christ in the world that are not infected with *Idolatry* or *Persecution*, and restore their *Unity* unto the Terms and Conditions left unto them by Christ and his Apostles; and if in any thing we are found uncompliant therewithal, we shall without repining, bear the reproach of it, and hasten an amendment.

Another Cause of the evil Effects and Consequents mentioned, is the great *neglect that hath been in Churches, and Church-Rulers, in the pursuance of the open direct Ends of the Gospel*, both as to the Doctrine and Discipline of it. This hath been such, and so evident in the world, that it is altogether in vain for any to deny it, or to attempt an Excuse of it. And men have no reason to flatter themselves, that whilst they live in an *open neglect* of their own Duty, others will always, according to their wills or Desires, attend with dili-

diligence unto what they prescribe unto them. If
 c Churches or their Rulers could excuse or justify
 their Members, in all the evils that may befall
 them through their Miscarriages and Mal-admini-
 strations, it might justly be expected that they
 should go along with them, under their conduct,
 whither-ever they should lead them. But if it can
 never be obliterated out of the Minds and Consci-
 ences of men, that they must *every one live by his
 own Faith*, and every one give an account of him-
 self unto God, and that every one, notwithstanding
 the interposition of the help of Churches and their
 Rulers, is obliged immediately in his own person,
 to take care of his whole Duty towards God ; it
 cannot be, but that in such cases, they will judge
 for themselves, and what is meet for them to do. In
 case therefore that they find the Churches where-
 unto they do relate under the guilt of the neglect
 mentioned, it is probable that they will provide for
 themselves and their own safety. In this state of
 things it is morally impossible, but that *Differences*
 and *Divisions* will fall out, which might all of them
 have been prevented, had there been a due atten-
 dance unto the Work, Doctrine, Order and Dis-
 cipline of the Gospel, in the Churches that were
 in possession of the Care and Administration of
 them. For it is hard for men to believe, that by
 the Will and Command of Christ they are inevita-
 bly shut up under spiritual disadvantages ; seeing
 it is certain that he hath ordered all things in the
 Church for their Edification. But the considerati-
 on of some particular Instances, will render this
Cause of our Divisions more evident and manifest.

The

The first End of Preaching the Gospel is the *Conversion of the Souls of men unto God*; Acts. 26. 17, 18. This we suppose will not be questioned, nor denied. That the work hereof in all Churches ought to be attended and pursued with *Zeal*, Diligence, Labour and Care, all accompanied with constant and fervent Prayers for success in and by the *Ministers and Rulers of them*, (1 Tim. 5. 17. 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2.) is a Truth also that will not admit of any Controversie among them that believe the Gospel. Herein principally do men in Office in the Church, exercise and manifest their *Zeal* for the Glory of God, their compassion towards the Souls of men, and acquit themselves faithfully in the Trust committed unto them by the *great Shepherd of the Sheep*, Christ Jesus. If now in any Assembly, or other Societies professing themselves to be *Churches of Christ*, and claiming the Right and Power of Churches towards all persons living within the bounds or limits which they have prescribed unto themselves, *this work* be either totally neglected, or carelessly & perfunctorily attended unto; if those on whom it is *immediately incumbent*, do either suppose themselves free from any Obligation thereunto, upon the pretence of other Engagements; or do so dispose of themselves in their *relation unto many Charges* or Employments, as that it is impossible they should duly attend unto it, or are *unable and insufficient* for it; so that indeed there is not in such Churches a due representation of the Love, Care and Kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ towards the Souls of men, which he hath ordained the Administrations of his Gospel to testify; it cannot be, but that great

thoughts of heart, and no small disorder of mind, will be occasioned in them, who understand aright how much the principal end of constituting Churches in this world is neglected among them. And although it is their duty, for a season patiently to bear with, and quietly seek the Reformation of this Evil in the Churches whereunto they do belong; yet when they find themselves *excluded*, it may be by the very Constitution of the Church its self, it may be by the iniquity of them that prevail therein, from the performance of any thing that tends thereunto, it will increase their disquietment. And whereas men do not joyn themselves, nor are by any other ways joyned unto Churches, for any *Civil or Secular Ends* or Purposes, but meerly for the promotion of Gods Glory, and the Edification of their own Souls in Faith and Gospel-Obedience; it is altogether vain for any to endeavour a satisfaction of their Consciences, that it is sin to *withdraw from such Churches*, wherein these ends are not pursued nor attainable. And yet a confidence hereof is that which hath countenanced sundry *Church-Guides* into that neglect of Duty, which many complain of, and groan under at this day.

The second end of the Dispensation of the Gospel in the Assemblies of the Churches of Christ by the Ministers of them, is the *Edification of them that are converted* unto God, and do believe. Herein consists that *feeding of his Sheep and Lambs* that the Lord Christ hath committed unto them: And it is mentioned as the principal end for which the Ministry was ordained; or for which *Pastors and Teachers* are granted unto the Church, *Eph. 4. 8, 9, 10, 11,*

12. And the Scripture abounds in the Declaration of what skill and knowledge in the *Mystery of the Gospel*, what Attendance unto the Word and Prayer, what Care, watchfulness and diligent Labour in the Word and Doctraine, are required unto a due discharge of the Ministerial Duty. Where it is omitted, or neglected, where it is carelessly attended unto, where those on whom it is incumbent, *do* act more like *Hirelings* than true Shepherds, where they want skill to *divide the Word aright*, or wisdom and knowledge to declare from it the whole Counsel of God, or diligence to be urgent continually in the Application of it; there the *principal end* of all Church-Communion is ruined and utterly lost. And where it so falls out, let any man judge what thoughts they are like to be exercised withal, who make Conscience of the performance of their own Duty, and understand the necessity of enjoying the Means that Christ hath appointed for their edification. And it is certain, that such Churches will in *vain*, or at least *unjustly* expect that Professors of the Gospel should abide in their particular communion, when they cannot or do not provide *food* for their Souls, whereby they may live to God. Unless all the Members of such Churches are equally asleep in security, *Divisions* among them will in this case ensue. Will any Disciple of Christ esteem himself obliged to *starve his own Soul*, for the sake of communion with them who have sinfully destroyed the principal end of all Church-communion? Is there any Law of Christ, or any Rule of the Gospel, or any Duty of Love, that require them so to do? The sole immediate end of mens joyning in Churches,

being *in their own edification*, and usefulness unto others, can they be bound in Conscience alwayes to abide there, or in the communion of those Churches, where it is not to be attained, where the means of it are utterly cast aside? This may become such as know not their duty, nor care to be instructed in it, and are *willing to perish* in, and for the company of others. But for them which in such Cases shall provide according to the Rules of the Gospel for themselves, and their own safety, they may be censured, judged and severely treated by them whose Interest and Advantage it is so to do; they may be despised by *Riotous Persons* who *shout themselves* with their own Deceivings; but with the Lord Christ, the Judge of all, they will be accepted. And they do but encrease the dread of their own Account, who under pretence of Church-Power and Order, would *forcibly shut up Christians* in such a condition, as wherein they are kept short of all the true ends of the Institution of Churches. To suppose therefore that every *voluntary departure* from the *constant Communion* of such Churches, made with a design of joyning unto those, where the Word is dispensed with more diligence and Efficacy, is a *Schisme* from the Church of Christ, is to suppose that which neither the Scripture, nor Reason will give the least Countenance unto. And it would better become such Churches to return industriously unto a faithful *Discharge of their Duty*, whereby this occasion of Divisions may be removed out of the way, than to attempt their own Justification by the severe prosecution of such as depart from them.

Thirdly,

Thirdly; In pursuit of the Doctrine of the Gospel so improved and applyed, it is the known and open Duty of Churches in their Guides or Ministers, by all means to countenance and promote the *Growth of Light, Knowledge, Godliness, strictness and fruitfulness of Conversation*, in those Members of them, in whom they may be found, or do appear in an especial manner: Such are they to own, encourage, and make their companions, and endeavour that others may become like unto them. For unless men in their ordinary and common conversation, in their affections, and the interest which they have in the Administration of Discipline, do uniformly answer the Doctrine of Truth which they preach, it cannot be avoided but that it will be matter of *offence* unto others, and of *Reproach* to themselves. Much more will it be so, if instead of these things, those who *Preside in the Churches*, shall *beat their fellow servants, and eat and drink with the drunken*. But by all wayes it is their duty to separate the *precious from the vile*, if they intend to be as the Mouth of the Lord, even in their Judgments, Affections, and Conversations: And herein what Wisdom, Patience, Diligence, Love, Condescension and Forbearance are required, they alone know, and they full well know, who for any season have in their places conscientiously endeavoured the Discharge of their Duty. But whatever be the *Labour* which is to be undergone therein, and the trouble wherewith it is attended, it is that which by the appointment of Christ all Ministers of the Gospel are obliged to attend unto. They are not by contrary *affings* to make *sad the hearts* of them whom God would

would not have made sad, nor to *strengthen the hands* of them whom God would not have encouraged, as they will answer it at their peril. The hearts of *Church Guides*, and of those who in an especial manner fear God, thriving in Knowledge and Grace under the Dispensation of the Word, ought to be *knot together in all holy affections*, that they may together grow up into him who is the Head. For where there is the greatest evidence & manifestation of the power and presence of Christ in any, there ought their Affections to be most intense. For as such persons are *the Crown*, the Joy and rejoycing of their Guides, and will appear to be so in the Day of the Lord; so they do know, or may easily do so, what Obligations are on them, to honour and pay all due respects unto their Teachers, how much on all accounts they owe unto them, whereby their mutual Love may be confirmed. And where there is this *Uniformity* between the *Doctrine* of the Gospel as Preached, and the *Duties* of it as practised, then are they both beautiful in the eyes of all Believers, and effectual unto their proper ends. But where things in Churches, through their negligence or corruption, or that of their *Guides*, are quite otherwise, it is easie to conjecture what will ensue thereon. If those who are forwardest in Profession, who give the greatest evidence that they have received the power of that Religion which is taught and owned among them, who have apparently attained a *growth* in spiritual Light and Knowledge above others, shall be so far from being peculiarly cherished and regarded, from being loved, liked, or associated withal, as that on the other side they shall be

marked, observed, reproached, and it may be in every slight provocation put even to outward trouble; whilst men of worldly and prophane Conversations, ignorant, perhaps riotous and debauched, shall be the delight and companions of Church *Guides and Rulers*, it cannot be that such Churches should long continue in peace; nor is that peace wherein they continue much to be valued. An Agreement in such wayes and practises, is rather to be esteemed a *Conspiracy* against Christ and Holiness, than Church Order or Concord. And when men once find themselves hated, and it may be *Persecuted*, for no other cause, as they believe, but because they labour in their Lives and Professions to expresse the power of that Truth wherein they have been instructed, they can hardly avoyd the entertainment of severe thoughts concerning them, from whom they had just reason to expect other usage; is also to provide for their own more peaceable encouragement and edification.

Fourthly, Hereunto also belongeth the due exercise of *Gospel Discipline*, according to the mind of Christ. It is indeed by some called into question, whether there be any Rule or *Discipline* appointed by Christ to be exercised in his Churches. But this doubt must respect, such outward forms and modes of the Administration of these things, which are supposed, but not proved necessary. For whether the Lord Christ hath appointed some to *Rule*, and some to be *ruled*; whether he hath prescribed *Laws* or *Rules*, whereby the One should govern, and the other obey; whether he hath determined the *Matter, Manner, and End* of this Rule and Government

vernment, cannot well be called into Controversie
 by such as profess to believe the Gospel. Of what
nature or kind these Governours or Rulers are to
 be, what is their *Office*, how they are to be invested
 therewith, and by what Authority, how they are
 to behave themselves in the Administration of the
 Laws of the Church, are things determined by him
 in the Word. And for the *Matters* about which
 they are to be conversant, it is evidently declared
 of what nature they are, how they are to be manna-
 ged, and to what end. The *Qualifications* and Du-
 ties of those who are to be admitted into the
 Church, their deportment in it, their removal
 from it, are all expressed in the Lawes and Directi-
 ons given unto the same end. In particular it is
 ordained, That those who are unruly or disorder-
 ly, who walk contrary unto the Rules and wayes
 of holiness prescribed unto the Church, shall be
rebuked, admonished, instructed; and if after all
 means used for their amendment they abide in
 impenitency, that they be ejected out of Communi-
 on. For the Church, as visible, is a Society gathe-
 red and erected to express and declare the *Holiness*
of Christ, and the power of his Grace, in his Person
 and Doctrine: And where this is not done, no
 Church is of any advantage unto the interests of his
 Glory in this World. The Preservation therefore
 of *Holiness* in them, whereof the Discipline menti-
 oned is an effectual means, is as necessary, and of
 the same importance with the preservation of their
 Being. The Lord Christ hath also expressly ordain-
 ed, That in case *Offences* should arise in and among
 his Churches, that in and by them they should be

composed, according to the Rules of the Word, and his own Lawes; and in particular, that in sinful miscarriages causing offence or scandal, there be a regular proceeding, according unto an *especial Law* and Constitution of his, for the removal of the offence, and recovery of the offender; as also that those who in other cases have fallen by the power of temptation, should be restored by a spirit of meekness; and, not to instance in more Particulars, that the *whole Flock* be continually watched over, exhorted, warned, instructed, comforted, as the necessities or occasions of the whole, or the several Members of it, do require. Now supposing these, and the like Laws, Rules, and Directions, to be given and enjoyed by the Authority of Christ (which gives Warranty for their Execution, unto men prudent for the ordering of affairs according to their necessary circumstances, and Believers of the Gospel, doing all things in obedience unto him) we judge that a compleat *Rule or Government*, is erected thereby in the Church. However we know that the exercise of Discipline in every Church, so far as the Laws and Rules of it are expressed in the Scripture, and the Ends of it directed unto, is as necessary as any Duty enjoyed unto us in the whole course of our Gospel Obedience. And where this is neglected, it is in vain for any Churches to expect *Peace and Unity* in their Communion, seeing it self neglecteth the principal means of them. It is pleaded, that the mixture of those that are wicked and ungodly in the sacred Administrations of the Church, doth neither defile the Administrations themselves, nor render them unuseful unto those who are rightly interested in them, and duly prepared for the participation of them.

them: Hence that no Church ought to be forsaken, nor its Communion withdrawn from merely on that account, many of *old* and of *late* have pleaded. Nor do we say, that this solely of its self, is sufficient to justify a separation from any Church. But when a Church shall tolerate in its Communion, not only *evil men*, but their *evils*, and absolutely refuse to use the Discipline of Christ for the Reformation of the One, and the taking away of the other, there is great danger least the *whole Lump be leavened*, and the edification of particular persons be obstructed, beyond what the Lord Christ requires of them to submit unto, and to acquiesce in.

Neither will things have any better success where the *Discipline degenerates into an outward forcible Jurisdiction and Power*. The things of Christ are to be administred with the Spirit of Christ. Such a frame of heart and mind as was in him, is required of all that *act under him*, and in his Name. Wherefore Charity, Pity, Compassion, Condescension, Meekness and Forbearance, with those other Graces, which were so glorious and conspicuous in him, and in all that he did, are to bear sway in the minds of them who exercise this Care and Duty for him in the Church. To set up such a *Form of the Administration of Discipline*; or to commit the exercise of it unto such persons, as whereby, or by whom, the Lord Christ in his Rule of the Church, would be represented as *furios, captious, proud, covetous, oppressive*, is not the way to honour him in the world, nor to preserve the peace of the Churches. And indeed some while they boast of the Imitation of Christ and his Example in opposition to his Grace, do in their Lives and Practises make unco
the

the world a Representation of the Devil. But an account of this Degeneracy is given so distinctly by *Feitro Suave*, the Author of the *History of the Council of Trent*, lib. 4: *ad Ann. 1551.* that we think it not unmeet to express it in his own words. He saith therefore, that, *Christ having commanded his Apostles to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, he left also unto them, in the person of all the faithful, this principal precept, to love one another, charging them to make peace between those that dissented, and for the last Remedy giving the care thereof to the Body of the Church; promising it should be bound and loosed in Heaven, whatever they did bind and loose on earth; and that whatever they did ask with a common consent, should be granted by the Father.* In this charitable office, to give satisfaction to the offended, and pardon to the offender, the Primitive Church was alwayes exercised. And in conformity to this, *St. Paul ordained, that brethren having Civil Suits one against another, should not go to the Tribunals of Infidels; but that wise men should be appointed to judge the Differences; and this was a kind of Civil Judgment, as the other had the similitude of a Criminal; but were both so different from the Judgments of the world, that as these are executed by the Power of the Judge who enforceth submission, so those only by the will of the guilty to receive them; who refusing of them, the Ecclesiastical Judge remaineth without execution, and hath no power but to foreshew the Judgment of God, which according unto his omnipotent good pleasure will follow in this life or the next.* And indeed the Ecclesiastical Judgment did deserve the name of Charity, in regard that it did only induce the guilty to submit, and the Church to judge with such sincerity, that neither in the one any bad ef-

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fect could have place, nor just complaint in the other; and the excess of charity in correcting, did make the Corrector to feel greater pain than the corrected; so that in the Church no punishment was imposed, without lamentation of the multitude, and greater of the better sort. And this was the cause why to correct was called to Lament. So St. Paul rebuking of the Corinthians, for not chastising the incestuous, said, you have not lamented to separate such a Transgressor from you. And in another Epistle, I fear that when I come unto you, I shall not find you such as I desire, but in contentions and tumults, and that at my coming I shall lament many of those who have sinned before. The Judgment of the Church (as it is necessary in every multitude) was fit that it should be conducted by one, who should preside and guide the action, propose the matters, and collect the points to be consulted on. This care due to the most principal and worthy person, was always committed to the Bishop: And when the Churches were many, the propositions and deliberations were made by the Bishop, first in the Colledge of the Priests and Deacons, which they called the Presbitery, and there were ripened, to receive afterwards the last resolution in the general Congregation of the Church. This form was still on foot in the year 250, and is plainly seen by the Epistles of Cyprian, who in the matter concerning those who did eat of meats offered to Idols, and subscribe to the Religion of the Gentiles, writeth to the Presbitery, that he doth not think to do any thing without their counsel, & consent of the people, & writeth to the people, that at his return he will examine the causes and merits thereof in their presence, and under their judgment: and he wrote to those Priests, who of their own brain had reconciled some, that they should give an account to the people.

The Goodness and Charity of the Bishops made their Opinion for the most part to be followed, and by little and little, was cause, that the Church, Charity waxing cold, not regarding the Charge laid upon them by Christ, did lean the ear to the Bishop; and Ambition, a witty Passion, which doth insinuate it self in the shew of Virtue, did cause it to be readily embraced. But the principal cause of the change was the ceasing of the Persecutions: For then the Bishops did erect, as it were a Tribunal, which was much frequented; because as Temporal Commodities, so Suits did encrease. This judgment, though it were not as the former, in regard of the Form, to determine all by the Opinion of the Church, yet it was of the same Sincerity. Whereupon Constantine seeing how profitable it was to determine Causes, and that by the Authority of Religion, captious actions were discovered, which the Judges could not penetrate, made a Law that there should lie no Appeal from the Sentences of Bishops, which should be executed by the Secular Judge. And if, in a Cause depending before a Secular Tribunal, in any state thereof, either of the Parties, though the other contradict, shall demand the Episcopal judgment, the Cause shall be immediately remitted to him. Here the Tribunal of the Bishop began to be a common Pleading Place, having Execution by the Ministry of the Magistrate, and to gain the name of Episcopal Jurisdiction, Episcopal Audience, and such like. The Emperor Val-

lence did enlarge it ; who, in the Year 365.
 gave the Bishop the care over all the Prizes of
 vendible things : This Judicial Negotiation
 pleased not the good Bishops. Poldonius
 doth recount, that Austin, being employed here-
 in, sometimes until Dinner-time, sometimes
 longer, was wont to say, that it was a trouble,
 and did divert him from doing things proper
 unto him ; and himself writeth, that it was to
 leave things profitable, and to attend things
 tumultuous and perplexed. And St. Paul did
 not take it unto himself, as being not fit for a
 Preacher ; but would have it given to others.
 Afterwards, some Bishops beginning to abuse
 the Authority given them by the Law of Con-
 stantine, that was seventy years after, revo-
 ked by ~~Hor~~radius and Honorius ; and an
 Ordination made, that they should judge Causes
 of Religion, and not Civil, except both Par-
 ties did consent, and declared that they should
 not be thought to have a Court : Which Law
 being not much observed in Rome, in regard of
 the great power of the Bishops, Valentinian
 being in the City in the year 452. did renew
 it, and made it to be put in execution. But a
 little after, some part of the Power taken a-
 way, was restored by the Princes that followed ;
 so that Justinian did establish unto them a
 Court and Audience, and assigned unto them
 the Causes of Religion, the Ecclesiastical
 Faults of the Clergy, and divers voluntary
 Jurisdictions also over the Laity. By these
 Degrees, the charitable correction of Christ,
 did

did degenerate into Domination, and made Christians lose their ancient Reverence and Obedience. It is denied in words, That Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction is Dominion; as is the Secular; yet one knoweth not how to put a difference between them. But St. Paul did put it, when he wrote to Timothy, and repeated it to Titus, that a Bishop should not be greedy of gain, nor a Striker. Now on the contrary, they made men pay for Processess, and imprison the Parties, as is done in the Secular Court, &c.

This Degeneracy of Discipline was long since esteemed burdensome, and looked on as the cause of innumerable troubles and grievances unto all sorts of people: Yea, it hath had no better esteem among them who had little or no acquaintance with what is taught concerning these things in the Scripture: Only they found an Inconsistency in it with those Laws and Priviledges of their several Countries, whereby their Civil Liberties and Advantages were confirmed unto them. And if at any time it take place or prevail amongst Persons of more Light and Knowledge, who are able to compare it, or the practice of it, with the Institutions of Christ in the Gospel, and the manner of the Administration therein also directed, it greatly alienates the minds of men from the Communion of such Churches. Especially it doth so, if set up unto an exclusion of that benigne, kind, spiritual, and every way useful Discipline, that Christ hath appointed to be ex-

exercised in his Church. When Corruptions and Abuses were come to the height in the *Papacy* in this matter, we know what ensued thereon. *Divines* indeed, and sundry other Persons Learned and Godly, did principally insist on the Errors and *Heresies* which prevailed in the *Church of Rome*, with the Defilements and Abominations of their Worship. But that which alienated the minds of *Princes*, *Magistrates*, and whole Nations from them, was the *Ecclesiastical Domination* which they had craftily erected, and cunningly mannaged unto the ends of their own Ambition, Power and Avarice, under the name of Church-Rule and Discipline. And wherever any thing of the *same kind* is continued, that a Rule under the same Pretence is erected and exercised in any Church, after the nature of *Secular Courts*, by force and power, put forth in *Legal Citations*, Penalties, Pecuniary Mulcts, without an open evidence of mens being acted in what they do herein, by *Love*, Charity, Compassion towards the Souls of men, *Zeal* for the Glory of God, and Honour of Christ, with a Design for the Purity, Holiness and Reformation of the Members of it, that Church may not expect Unity and Peace any longer than the terrour of its Proceedings doth over-balance other Thoughts and Desires proceeding from a sense of Duty in all that belong unto it. Yea, whatever is, or is to be the manner of the *Administration of Discipline* in the Church,
about

about which there may be doubtful Disputations, which men of an ordinary capacity may not be able clearly to determine; yet if the *avowed end* of it be not the Purity and Holiness of the Church, and if the *Effects* of it in a tendency unto that End be not manifest, it is hard to find out whence our Obligation to a compliance with it, should arise. And where an outward Conformity unto some Church-Order is aimed at alone, in the room of all other things, it will quickly prove it self to be nothing, or of no value in the sight of Christ. And these things *do alienate* the minds of many from an acquiescencie in their Stations, or Relations to such Churches. For the principal Enforcements of mens Obedience and Reverence unto the Rulers of the Church, is because they *watch diligently for the good of their Souls, as* Heb. 13. *those that must give an Account.* And if they see such set over them as give no evidence of any such *watc'ful Care* acting its self according to those Scripture-Directions which are continually read unto them; but rather rule them with force and rigour, *seeking theirs, not them*, they grow weary of the Yoke, and sometimes regularly, sometimes irregularly, contrive their own Freedom and Deliverance.

It may not here be amiss to enquire into the *Reasons and Occasions* that have seduced Churches and their Rulers into the Miscarriages insisted on. Now these are chiefly some

Principles with their Application that they have trusted unto; but which indeed have really deceived them, and will yet continue so to do. And the first of these is, that whereas they are true Churches, and thereon intrusted with all Church-Power and Privileges, they need not further concern themselves to seek for Grounds or Warranty to keep up all their Members unto their Communion. For be they otherwise what they will, so long as they are True Churches, it is their duty to abide in their Peace and Order. If any call their Church-state into question, they take no consideration of them, but how they may be punished; it may be, destroyed, as perverse Schismatics. And they are ready to suppose that upon an acknowledgment that they are True Churches, every dissent from them in any thing, must needs be criminal: As if it were all one to be a True Church, and to be in the Truth and Right in all things; a supposition whereof, includes a Nullity in the state of those Churches which in the least differ from them; than which, there is no more uncharitable, nor Schismatical Principle in the world: But in the common Definition of Schism, that it is a causeless Separation from a true Church; that term of causeless, is very little considered or weighed, by them whose Interest it is, to lay the Charge of it on others. And hence it is come to pass, that where-ever there have been complaints of Faults, Mis-carriages,

carriages, Errors, Defections of Churches, in late Ages their *Counsels* have only been how to *destroy the Complainers*, not in the least how they should reform themselves; as though in Church-Affairs, Truth, Right and Equity, were entailed on Power and Possession. How the Complaints concerning the *Church of Rome*, quickned by the Outcries of so many *Provinces of Europe*, and Evidence in matter of Fact, were eluded and frustrated in the *Council of Trent*, leaving all things to be tried out by Interest and force, is full well known. For they know that no *Reformation* can be attempted and accomplished, but it will be a business of great Labour, Care and Trouble, things not delightful unto the minds of men at ease. Besides, as it may possibly ruffle or discompose some of the *Chiefs* in their present ways or enjoyments; so it will as they fear, tend to their Disreputation; as though they had formerly been out of the way, or neglective of their Duty: And this, as they suppose, would draw after it another *Inconvenience*, by reflecting on them and their Practices, as the Occasions of former Disorders and Divisions. They chuse therefore generally to flatter themselves under the Name and Authority of the Church, and lay up their Defence and Security against an humble painful *Reformation*, in a Plea that they need it not. So was it with the Church of *Laodicea* of old, who in the

Rev. 3.
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height of her decaying condition, flattered her self, *That she was rich, and encreased in Goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not,* or would not acknowledge, *that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Now it cannot but seem exceeding strange unto men who wisely consider these things, that whereas the Churches which were *planted and watered by the Apostles themselves,* and enjoyed for some good season the presence and advantage of their infallible Guidance to preserve them in their original purity and order, did within a few years, many of them, so degenerate, and stand in need of Reformation, that our Lord Jesus Christ threatened from Heaven to cast them off and destroy them, unless they did speedily reform themselves according to his mind; that those now in the world, ordered at first by persons fallible, and who in many things were actually deceived, should so continue in their purity and holiness, from Age to Age, as to stand in need of no Reformation or Amendment. Well will it be, if it prove so at the great Day of Visitation. In the meantime it becomes the Guides of all the Churches in the world, to take care that there do not such Decays of Truth, Holiness and Purity in Worship, fall out *under their hand* in the Churches wherein they preside, as that for them they should be rejected by our Lord Jesus Christ; as he threatens to deal with
those

those who are guilty of such defections. For the state of the *Generality of Churches* is such at this day in the world, as he who thinks them not to stand in need of any *Reformation*, may justly be looked on as a part of their sinful Degeneracy. We are not ignorant what is usually pleaded in Barr unto all endeavours after Church-Reformation: For, they say, if upon the Clamours of a *few humorous, discontented Persons*, whom nothing will please, and who, perhaps are not agreed among themselves, a Reformation must instantly be made or attempted, there will be nothing stable, firm or sacred left in the Church. Things *once well established*, are not to be called into question upon every ones Exceptions. And these things are vehemently pleaded, and urged to the exclusion of all thoughts of changing any thing, though evidently for the better. But *long continued complaints*, and Petitions of Multitudes, whose Sincerity hath received as great an attestation as Humane Nature, or Christian Religion can give, it may be deserve not to be so despised: However the *jealousie* which Churches and their Rulers ought to have over themselves, their state and condition, and the presence of the Glory of Christ amongst them, or its departure from them, especially considering the fearful example of the Defection and Apostacy of many Churches, which is continually before their Eyes, seems to require

quire a readiness in them on every Intimation or Remembrance, to search into their state and condition, and to redress what they find amiss: For suppose they should be in the *Right*, and blameless as to those Orders and Constitutions, wherein others dissent from them; yet there may be such Defects and Declensions, in Doctrine, Holiness, and the Fruits of them in the world, as the most strict observation of outward Order, will neither countenance, nor compensate: For to think to preserve a Church by *Outward Order*, when its internal Principles of Faith and Holiness are decayed, is but to do like him, who endeavouring to set a *Dead Body upright*, but failing in his Attempt, concluded, that there was somewhat wanting within.

Another Principle of the same importance, and applied unto the same purpose, is, that the people are neither able, nor fit to judge for themselves, but ought in all things to give themselves up unto the conduct of their Guides, and to rest satisfied in what they purpose and prescribe unto them. The imbibing of this *Apprehension*, which is exceedingly well suited to be made a Covering to the Pride and Ignorance of those unto whose Interests it is accommodated, makes them impatient of hearing any thing, concerning the Liberty of Christians in common, to judge of what is their Duty, what they are to do, and what they are not to do in things

things Sacred and Religious. Only it is
 acknowledged, there is so much *Ingenuity*
 in the management of this Principle and its
 Application, that it is seldom extended by
 any beyond their own Concernments: For
 whereas the *Church of Rome* hath no way
 to maintain its self in its *Doctrine* and Es-
 sential Parts of its Constitution, but by an
 implicit Faith and Obedience in its *Subjects*:
 seeing the animating Principles of its Profes-
 sion, will endure no kind of impartial Test
 or Trial, they extend it unto *all things* as
 well in Matters of Faith, as of Worship
 and Discipline. But those who are secure,
 that *the Faith* which they profess will endure
 an examination by the Scripture, as being
 founded therein, and thence educed, they
 will allow unto the people, at least a *Judg-*
ment of discerning Truth from Falshood, to
 be exercised about the Doctrines which they
 teach: But as for the things which concern
 the *Worship of God*, and Rule of the Church,
 wherein they have an especial Interest and
 Concern, there they betake themselves for
 relief unto this Principle. Now as there
 is more *Honesty* and Safety in this latter way
 than in the former; so it cannot be denied,
 but that there is less of *ingenuity* and self-
 consistency: For if you will allow the
 people to make a judgment in and about *any*
thing that is Sacred or Religious, you will never
 know how to hit a Joint aright, to make a
 separation among such things; so as to say
 with

with any pretence of Reason, about these things they may judge for themselves, but not about those. And it is a little too open to say, that they may exercise a Judgment about what God hath appointed, but none about what we appoint our selves. But without offence be it spoken, this *Apprehension* in its whole Latitude, and under its restrictions, is so weak and ridiculous, that it must be thought to proceed from an excess of prejudice, if any man of Learning should undertake to patronize it. Those who speak in these things out of *Custom and Interest*, without a due examination of the Grounds and Reasons of what they affirm or deny, as many do, are of no consideration: And it is not amiss for them to *keep their distance*, and stand upon their Guard, lest many of those whom they exclude from judging for themselves, should be found more competent Judges in those Matters than themselves. And let Churches and Church-Rulers do what they please, every man at last will be *determined* in what is meet for him to do, by his own Reason and Judgment. Churches may inform the minds of men, they cannot enforce them. And if those that adhere unto any Church, do not do so, because they judge that it is their duty, and best for them so to do, they therein differ not much from an Herd of Creatures, that are called by another name. And yet a secret *Apprehension* in some, that the *Disposal* of the

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Concernments of the Worship of God; is so left and confined unto themselves, as that nothing is left unto the people but the Glory of Obedience, without any sedulous enquiry after what is their own duty, with respect unto that account which every one must give of himself unto God, doth greatly influence them into the neglects insisted on. And when any of the people come to know their own *Liberty and Duty* in these things, as they cannot but know it, if at all they apply their minds unto the consideration of them, they are ready to be alienated from those who will neither permit them to judge for themselves, nor are able to answer for them, if they should be misled. For if the *blind lead the blind*, as well he *that is led*, as he *that leads*, will into the Ditch.

Add hereunto the thoughts of some, that *Secular Grandeur*, and outward Pomp, with a Distance and Reservedness from the Conversation of ordinary men, are necessary in *Ecclesiasticks*, to raise and preserve that popular veneration, which they suppose to be their due. Without this it is thought *Government* will not be carried on, nor the minds of men awed unto Obedience. Certain it is that this was not the Judgment of the *Apostles* of old, nor of the Bishops or Pastors of the Primitive Churches. It is certain also, that no *Direction* is given for it, in any of the Sacred, or ancient Ecclesiastical Writings. And yet they all of them
abound

abound with Instructions how the *Guides* of the Church should preserve that respect which is their due. The sum of what they

1 *Pet.* 5. teach us to this purpose is, that in *Humili-*
 1, 2, 3. *ty, Patience, Self-denial, Readiness to take*
Acts 20. up the Cross, in Labours, Kindness, Com-
 18, 19, passion and Zeal in the exercise of all the
 20, 21, Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, they
 31. should excel and go before the Flock as their Example. This way of procuring veneration unto Church-Guides by *worldly State, Greatness, seeming Domination or Power,* was, as far as we can find, an utter stranger unto the primitive times: Yea, not only so,

Lnk. 22. but it seems to be expressly prohibited, in
 24, 25. that Direction of our Saviour unto them,
 26. for avoiding Conformity in these things unto the Rulers of the world. But those times they say are past and gone: There remains not that piety and *Devotion* in Christians, as to reverence their Pastors, for their Humility, Graces, Labours and Gifts. The good things of this world are now given them to be used; and it is but a *Popular Levelling Spirit* that envies the Dignities and Exaltation of the Clergy. Be it so therefore, that in any place they are justly and usefully, at least as unto themselves, possessed of Dignities and Revenues; and far be it from us, or any of us to *envy* them their Enjoyments; or to endeavour their deprivation of them: But we must crave leave to say, that the use of them to the *End* mentioned is vain; and wholly

wholly frustrate. And if it be so indeed,
 that Christians, or professors of the Gospel,
 will not pay the *Respect and Duty* which
 they owe unto their Pastors and Guides upon
 the account of their Office, with their work
 and labour therein, it is an open evidence
 how great a necessity there is for all men to
 endeavour the reduction of primitive Light,
 Truth, Holiness and Obedience into Churches:
 For this is that which hath endangered
 their Ruine, and will effect it, if continued;
 namely, an *Accommodation* of Church-
 Order and Discipline, with the State and
 Deportment of Rulers, unto the Decayes
 and Irreligion of the people, which should
 have been corrected and removed by their
 Reformation: But we hope better things of
 many Christians, whose Faith and Obedience
 are rather to be imitated, than the *corrupt
 Degeneracy* of others to be complied
 with, or provided for. However, it is evident
 that this corrupt perswasion hath in most
 Ages, since the days of *Paulus Samosatenus*,
 let out and given countenance unto the
 Pride, Covetousness, Ambition and Vain-
 glory of several *Ecclesiasticks*. For how can
 it be otherwise with them, who being pos-
 sessed of the *Secular Advantages* which
 some Churches have obtained in the world,
 are otherwise utterly destitute of those Qual-
 ifications, which the Names of the places
 they possess, do require. And yet all this
 while it will be impossible to give *one single
 Instance*,

Instance, where that Respect and Estimation which the Scripture requires in the people towards their Spiritual Guides, were ever ingenerated or improved by that worldly *Grandeur*. Pomp and Domination, which some pretend to be so useful unto that end and purpose: For that *Awe* which is put thereby on the Spirits of the common sort of men; that *Terror* which these things strike into the minds of any who may be obnoxious unto Trouble and Disadvantage from them; that *outward Qbservance* which is by some done unto persons vested with them, with the *Admission* which they have thereby into an equality of Society with great men in the world, are things quite of another Nature. And those who satisfie and please themselves herewith, instead of that *Regard* which is due unto the Officers or Guides of the Churches of Christ, from the people that belong unto them, do but help on their *Defection* from their Duty incumbent on them. Neither were it difficult to manifest, what innumerable scandalous offences, proceeding from the *Pride* and Elation of Mind that is found among many, who being perhaps *Young* and *Ignorant*, it may be corrupt in their Conversations, having nothing to bear up themselves withal, but an Interest in *Dignities* and worldly Riches, have been occasioned by this corrupt Perswasion. And it is not hard to judge how much is lost hereby from the true *Glory* and Beauty of the Church.

Church. The people are quietly suffered to decay in that Love and Respect towards their Pastors, which is their Grace and Duty, whilst they will pay that outward Veneration which worldly Grandeur doth acquire, and Pastors satisfying themselves therewith, grow neglective of that exemplary Humility and Holiness, of that Laborious Diligence in the dispensation of the Word, and care for the Soules of the Flock, which should procure them that *Holy Respect* which is due unto their Office by the Appointment of Jesus Christ. But these things are here mention'd only on the occasion of what was before discoursed of.

Another great Occasion of *Schismes and Divisions* among Christians, ariseth from the Remainers of that Confusion which was brought upon the Churches of *Europe*, by that general *Apostacy* from Gospei-Truth, Purity, and Order, wherein they were for sundry Ages involved : Few Churches in the world have yet totally freed themselves from being influenced by the *Relicks* of its Disorders: That such an *Apostacy* did befall these Churches, we shall not need to prove. A supposition of it, is the foundation of the present Church-state of *England*. That things should so fall out among them, was of old foretold by the Holy Ghost. That many Churches have received a signal Deliverance from the principal *Evils* of that *Apostasy* in the Reformation, we all acknow-

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ledge : For therein by several ways, and in several degrees of success, a return unto their pristine Faith and Order was sincerely endeavoured. And so far was there a Blessing accompanying of their endeavours, as that they were all of them delivered from things in themselves *pernitious* and destructive to the Souls of men. Nevertheless it cannot be denied, but that there do yet continue among them sundry *Remainders* of those Disorders, which under their fatal Declension they were cast into. Nor doth there need any further proof hereof, than the *incurable Differences* and Divisions that are found among them : For had they all attained their primitive condition, such Divisions with all their Causes had been prevented. And the Papists, upbraiding Protestants with their intestine Differences and Schismes, do but reproach them that they have not been able in an *hundred years* to rectifie all those Abuses, and remove all those Disorders, which they were inventing, and did introduce in a thousand. There is one thing only of this Nature, or that owes it self unto this Original, which we shall instance in, as an occasion of much Disorder in the present Churches, and of great Divisions that ensue thereon. It is known, none were admitted unto the fellowship of the Church in the Dayes of the Apostles, but upon their Repentance, Faith, and turning unto God. The plain Story of their Preaching, the Success which they had there-
in,

in, and their Proceedings to gather and plant Churches thereon, puts this out of the reach of all sober Contradiction. None will say, that they gathered Churches of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that is, whilst they continued such, nor of *open Sinners*, continuing to live in their sins. An evidence therefore, and *Confession* of Conversion to God, was unavoidably necessary to the Admission of Members in the first Churches. Neither will we ever contend with such importune Prejudices, as, under any pretences capable of a wrangling Countenance, shall set up against this evidence. Hence, in the *adornment of Charity*, all the Members of those Churches, were looked on as persons *really justified* and sanctified, as effectually converted unto God; and as such, were they saluted and treated by the Apostles: As such, we say they were looked on and owned; and as such, upon their Confession, it was the duty of all men, even of the Apostles themselves, to look on them, and own them; though absolutely in the sight of God, who alone is the *Searcher of the hearts of men*, some among them were *Hypocrites*, and some proved Apostates. But this Profession of Conversion unto God, by the Ministry of the Word, and the mutual acknowledgment of each other as so converted unto God in a way of Duty, was the foundation of holy *spiritual Love* and *Unity* among them. And although this did not, nor could preserve all the first Churches

absolutely free from *Schismes and Divisions*, yet was it the most Sovereign Antidote against that Infection, and the most effectual means for the reduction of Unity, after that by the violent interposition of mens Corruptions and Temptations, it had been lost for a season. Afterwards in the *Primitive times*, when many more took on them the profession of Christian Religion, who had not such eminent and visible Conversions unto God, as most of those had who were changed by the Ministry of the *Apostles*, that persons unfit and unqualified for that state and condition, of being Members of Churches, might not be admitted into them, unto the disturbance of their Order, and disreputation of their Holy Conversation, they were for some good season kept in the condition of *Expectants*, and called *Catechumens*, or persons that attended the Church for instruction. In this state they were taught the Mysteries of Religion, and trial was made of their *Faith*, *Holiness*, and constancy, before their Admission: And by this means was the preservation of the Churches in Purity, Peace, and Order, provided for: Especially were they so in conjunction with that *severe Discipline* which was then exercised towards all the Members of them. But after that the Multitudes of the *Gentile world*, in the times of the first Christian Emperors, pressed into the Church, and were admitted on much easier terms than those before mentioned, whole Nations came

to claim successively the privilege of *Church-Membership*, without any personal duty performed, or profession made unto that purpose on their part. And so do they continue to do in many places to this day. Men generally trouble themselves no farther about a *Title* to Church-Membership and Privileges, but rest in the prepossession of their Ancestors, and their own Nativity in such or such places: For whatever may be owned or acknowledged concerning the necessity of a *visible Profession* of Faith and Repentance, and that *credible* as to the sincerity of it in the judgment of Charity, it is certain for the most part, no such thing is required of any, nor performed by them. And they do but ill consult for the edification of the Church, or the good of the Souls of men, who would teach them to rest in an *outward formal Representation* of things, instead of the reality of Duties, and the power of Internal Grace. And no small part of the present ruine of Christian Religion owes it self unto this *corrupt Principle*. For whereas the things of it which consist in *Powers Internal*, and effectual Operations of Grace, have outward Representations of them, which from their Relation unto what they represent, are called by the same names with them, many take up with, and rest in these external things, as though Christianity consisted in them; although they are but a *dead Carcass*, where the quickning life

and Soul of internal Grace is wanting. Thus it is in this matter, where there is a shadow and appearance of *Church-Order*, when the truth and substance of it is far away. Men come together unto all the Ends of Church-Assemblies whereunto they are admitted, but on no other grounds, with no other hearts, nor designs, but on and with what they partake in any *Civil Society*, or joyntly engage in any other worldly Concern. And this Fundamental Errour in the Constitution of many Churches, is the occasion as of other Evils, so in particular of *Divisions* among professed Christians. Hence originally was the *Discipline of the Church* accommodated by various degrees to the Rule and Government of such persons, as understood little, or were little sensible of the Nature, Power, and Efficacy of that spiritual Discipline which is instituted in the Gospel, which thereby at last degenerated into the outward way of Force and Power before described: For the Churches began to be composed of such as could no otherwise be ruled. And instead of reducing them to their *Primitive Temper* and Condition whereunto the Evangelical Rule was suited, there was invented a way of Government accommodate unto that state whereinto they were lapsed, which those concerned found to be the far *eastern* work of the two. Hence did sincere *mutual Love* with all the fruits of it begin to decay among Church-Members; seeing they could not
have

have that tollerable perswasion of that Truth of Profession in each other which is necessary to preserve it *without Dissimulation*, and to provoke it unto a due Exercise. Hence did *private spiritual Communion* fail amongst them, the most being strangers unto all the ways and means of it; yea despising and contemning it in all the instances of its exercise; which will yet be found to be as the Life and Soul of all useful Church-communion. And where publick Communion is only attended unto with a neglect hereof, it will quickly wither and come to nothing: For on this occasion do all duties of *Watchfulness*, *Exhortations* and *Admonitions*, proceeding from mutual Love and Care of each others condition, so frequently recommended unto us in the Scripture, utterly cease and become disused. Hence Members of the same Church began to converse together as men only, or at the best *Civil Neighbours*; and if at all as Christians, yet not with respect unto that especial relation unto a particular Church, 1 Cor. 12. wherein their usefulness as *Members* of the 14, 15, same *Organical Body* is required. Hence 16, 17, some persons looking on these things as *intol-* 18, 19, 20. *erable*, and not only obstructive of their Edification, but destructive unto all really useful Church-Communion, we ought not to wonder if they have thought meet to provide otherwise for themselves. Not that we approve of *every departure* or withdrawing from the Communion of Churches, where

things continue under such disorders, but only shew what it is that occasioneth many so to do. For as there may sometimes be *just cause* hereof, and persons in so doing may mannage what they do according unto Scripture-Rule; so we doubt not but that some may *rashly and precipitately*, without due attendance unto all the Duties which in such Undertakings are required of them, without that Charity and Forbearance which no Circumstances can absolve them from, make themselves guilty of a blameable separation. And these are some of those things which we look upon as the *General Causes* or Occasions of all the *Schismes and Divisions* that are at this day found among Professors of the Gospel. Whether the guilt of them will not much cleave unto them by whom they are kept on foot and maintained, is worth your enquiry. For so doth it befall our *Humane Natures*, apt to be deceived and imposed on by various Preerences and Prejudices, that those are oftentimes highly *guilty themselves* of those miscarriages, whose chiefest satisfaction and glory consists in charging them on others. However if these things do not absolutely justify any in a *Secession* from the Churches whereunto they did relate; yet they render the matter so highly questionable, and the things themselves are so burdensome unto the minds of many, as that *Divisions* will thereon undoubtedly ensue. And when it is so fallen out, to design and contrive

contrive the reduction of all unto *outward Unity and Concord*, by forcing them, who on such occasions have dissented and withdrawn themselves from the Communion of any Church, without endeavouring the *removal* of these Occasions of their so doing, and the *Reformation* of those abuses which have given cause thereunto, is severe, if not unjust. But when the Lord Jesus Christ in his Care towards his Churches, and watchfulness over them, shall be pleased to *remove* these and the like stumbling-Blocks out of the way, there will, we hope, be a full return unto Gospel-Unity and Peace among them that serve and worship him on the Earth.

In this state of things, where-ever it be found, it is no wonder if the *Weaknesses, Ignorance, Prejudices* and Temptations of men do interpose themselves unto the encrease and heightning of those Divisions, whose Springs and Occasions lye elsewhere. When none of these *Provocations* were given them, yet we know there was enough in Professors themselves to bring forth the bitter fruit of Differences and *Schisms*, even in the dayes of the Apostles. How much more may we fear the like fruits and effects from the like *Principles* and corrupt affections? Now the Occasions of drawing them forth are more, Temptations unto them greater, Directions against them less evident and powerful; and all sense of *Ecclesiastical Authority*, through its abuse and male-administration, is, if not lost and ruined, yet

I Cor. I.

II.

Chap. 3. 3

yet much weakned and impaired. But from the darknes of the minds of men, and their *unmortified affections*, (as the best know but in part, nor are they perfectly sanctified) it is, that they are apt to *take offence* one at another, and thereon to judge and censure each other temerariouſly; and which is worſt of all, every one to make his own underſtanding and perſwaſion thereon, the Rule of Truth and Worſhip unto others. All ſuch wayes and courſes are *againſt us* in the matter of Love and Union, all tending to make and increaſe Diviſions among us. And the *Evil* that is in them, we might here declare, but that it falls frequently under the chaſtiſement of other hands: Neither indeed can it well meet with too much ſeverity of reproof. Only it were deſireable that thoſe by whom ſuch reproofs are mannaged, would take care not to give *advantages of Retortion* or ſelf-juſtification unto them that are reproved by them: But this they do unavoydably, whiſt they ſeem to make their own Judgments and Practices the ſole Rule and meaſure of what they approve or diſallow. In what *complies with them* there is nothing perverſe, and in what differs from them there is nothing ſincere. And on this foundation whiſt they reprove, *cenſuring*, raſh-judging and reproaching of others, with pride, ſelf-conceitedneſs, falſe Opinions, irregular practices in Church worſhip, or any other concerns of Religion, backbiting, calineſs in taking up falſe reports, with

from their with the like evils, as they deserve severely to
 be rebuked, those reprov'd by them are apt
 to think, that they see the guilt of many of the
 crimes charged on themselves, in them by
 whom they are reprov'd. So on all hands
 things gend'ring unto farther strife; whilst every
 party being conscious unto their own *sincerity*
 Truth, according unto the Rule of their present
 light, which is the only measure they can
 take of it, are ready to impeach the sincerity
 of them by whom they suppose themselves
 causelessly traduced and condemned. This evil
 therefore is to be diligently watched against
 by all that love Unity, Truth, Holiness, or
 Peace. And seeing there are Rules and Pre-
 cepts given us in the Scripture to this purpose,
 it may not be unmeet to call over some of
 them. One Rule of this nature and import, is
 that we should all of us study to be quiet, and to
 do our own business, in things Civil and Sa-
 cred. Who will harm men, who will be of-
 fended with them, whilst they are no other-
 wise busied in the world? And if any attempt
 to do them evil, what need have they to be
 troubled thereat? *Duty and Innocency* will
 give peace to a worthy soul in the midst of all
 storms, and whatever may befall it. Now will
 any one deny, or can they, but that it is the
 duty, and ought to be the business of every
 man to seek his own *edification*, and the saving
 of his soul? Deny this unto any man, and you
 put your self in the place of God to him, and
 make him more miserable than a Beast. And
 this

1 Thess. 4.

II.

this, which no man can forbid, no man can otherwise do, than according to that *Light and knowledge of the will of God* which he hath received: If this therefore be so attended to, that we do not thereby break in upon the concerns of others, nor disturb them in what is theirs, but be carryed on *quietly and peaceably* with an evidence in what we do, that it is merely our own personal duty, that we are in the pursuance of; all cause of offence will be taken away. For if any will yet be offended with men, because they peaceably seek the *salvation of their own souls*, or do that in order thereunto, which they cannot but do, unless they will cast off all sense of Gods authority over them, it is to seek occasions of offence against them, where none are given. But when any persons are acted by a *Pragmatical Curiosity* to interpose themselves in the *Wayes, Affairs, and Concerns* of other men, beyond what the *Laws of Love, usefulness, and mutual Christian aid*, do require, tumults, disorders, vexations, strife, emulations, with a world of evils, will ensue thereon; especially will they do so, when men are prone to dwell on the *real or supposed faults* of others, which on various pretences of *pity* for their persons, or a *detestation* of their evils, or *publick reproof* of them, they will aggravate, and so on all occasions expose them to publick censures, perhaps, as they think, out of zeal to Gods glory, and a desire for the Churches good: For the passions and interests of such persons, are

ready to swell over the bounds of modesty, society and peace, though through the blindness which all self-love is accompanied with, they seldom see clearly what they do. Would we therefore labour to see a beauty, desirableness and Honour in the greatest confinement of our thoughts, words and actions, *unto our selves and our own occasions*, that express Duty will admit of, it might tend very much to the preservation of Love and Peace among Professors, for unto this end it is prescribed unto us.

Secondly, it is strictly commanded us *that* *Mat. 6. 1.*
we should not judge, that we be not judged. 2.
 There is no Rule for mutual Conversation and *Luke 6.*
 Communion, in the Scripture, that is oftner *37.*
 repeated, or more earnestly inculcated: Nor *Rom. 14.*
 is there any of more *Use*, nor whose Grounds *3. 4. 10.*
 and Reasons, are more *evident* or more cogent. Judging and determining in our selves, *7am. 4.*
 or divulging Censures concerning others, *12.*
 their *Persons, States, and Conditions* towards God, their Principles as to truth and sincerity, their ways as to Righteousness and Holiness, whether past or present, any otherwise than by the perfect Law of Liberty, and that only when we are called thereunto in a way of Duty, is the Poyson of *common Love* and Peace, and the ruine of all Communion and Society, be it of what Nature it will. For us to judge and determine whether these or those Churches are *true Churches* or no, whether such Persons are *Godly* or no, whether

ther such of their Principles and actions are
 regular or no, and so condemn them in our
 Minds, (unless where open wickedness will
 justify the severest Reflections) is to *speake*
Evil of the Law, and to make our selves
 Judges of it, as well as of them who toge-
 ther with our selves are to be judged by it.
 Nor is a judgment of that Nature necessary
 unto our Advantage in the *Discharge* of any
Duty required at our hands. We may or-
 der all our Concernments towards Churches
 and Persons without making any *such judg-*
ment concerning them. But so strong is the
 Inclination of some Persons unto an *Excess*
 in this kind, that no consideration can pre-
 vail with them to cast it out according to its
 desert. Whether they do it as approving
 and justifying themselves in what they con-
 demn in others, or as a thing conducing un-
 to their Interest, or out of *Faction* and an
 especial Love to some one Party of Men, or
 some secret Animosities and hatred against o-
 thers, it is a matter they seldome well quit
 themselves of, whilst they are in this world.
 Yea so far do some suffer themselves to be
 transported, as that they cannot restrain
 from charging of others with the Guilt of
 such things as they know to be *charged on*
themselves, by them who pretend to be the
 only competent Judges in such Cases. And
 so will they also reflect upon, and complain
 of other men for Miscarriages by *severities*,
 in Instances exceedingly inferior, as by them-
 selves

selves represented, unto what it is known they were engaged in. But men are apt to think well of all they do themselves, or those whom they peculiarly regard, and to aggravate whatever they conceive amiss in such as they dislike. Were it not better by Love to *cover a multitude of faults*, and to leave the Judgment of Persons and things, wherein we are not concerned, unto him who judgeth Righteously, and will render unto every Man according to his works? However certain it is, that untill the Evil Fountain of bitter waters be stopped, untill we cease to *bless God even the Father*, and at the same time to *curse Men made after the Similitude of God*, the wounds that have been given to the Love and Peace of Professors will not be healed.

Thirdly, unto the same End are all Men forbidden to think that they have a *Dominion* over the Faith of others, or that the ordering and disposal of it is committed unto them. It is Christ alone who is the *Lord of the Consciences* of his Disciples. And therefore the best and greatest of the Sons of Men, who have been appointed by him to deal with others in his Name, have constantly disclaimed all thoughts of Power or Rule, over the Consciences or Faith of the meanest of his Subjects. How many ways this may be done, we are filled with *Experiences*; for no way whereby it may be so, hath been left unattemped. And the Evil of it hath invaded both

2 Cor. 1.

24.

1 Pet. 5.

3.

both *Churches* and *Particular Persons*: Some whereof who have been active in casting the *Dominion* of others, seem to have desired a Possession of it in themselves. And it is well, if where one *Pope* is rejected, many do not rise in his Place, who want nothing but his Power and Interest, to do his work. The Indignation of some, that others *do not in things comply* with their Sentiments, and subject themselves unto their Apprehensions and Dictates, ariseth from this Presumption: And the *Persecutions* wherein others engage, do all grow out of the same bitter Root. For men can no otherwise satisfy their Consciences herein, but by a supposition that they are warranted to *give measures* unto the Minds and Practices of others, that is, their Faith and Consciences, in Sacred things. And whilst this *Presumptuous Supposition* under any Pretence or colour possesseth the Minds of Men, it will variously act its self unto the Destruction of that Gospel Unity, which it is our Duty to preserve. For when they are perswaded that others ought to give up themselves absolutely to their Guidance in the things of Religion, either because of their *Office* and Dignity, or because they are *Wiser* than they, or it may be are only able to *dispute* more than they, if they do not immediately so do, especially seeing they cannot but judge themselves in the Right in all things, they are ready to charge their Refusal on all the *Corrupt Affections, Principles and Practices*, which they can sur-

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Some, or, their supposed just indignation suggest unto them. That they are *proud, ignorant, self-conceited, wilful, factious*, is immediately concluded; and a semblance unto such Charges shall be diligently sought out, and improved. Nothing but a deceiving Apprehension that they are some way or other meet to have a *Dominion* over the Faith of their Brethren and Fellow-Servants, would prevail with men, otherwise Sober and Learned, so to deal with all that dissent from them, as they are pleased to do.

Fourthly, All these Evils mentioned are much increased in the minds of men, when they are *puffed up* with a conceit of their own Knowledge and Wisdom: This therefore we are warned to avoid, that the Edification of the Church may be promoted, and Love preserved: For hence are very many apt to take *false measures* of things, especially of themselves, and thereon to cast themselves into many mischievous Mistakes. And this is apt to befall them, who for ends best known unto themselves, have with any ordinary diligence attended to the study of Learning. For upon a supposal of some competent furniture with *Natural Abilities*, they cannot but attain some skill and knowledge that the common sort of uneducated persons are unacquainted withal. Oftentimes indeed, their *Pre-eminence* in this kind, consists in matters of very small consequence or importance. But whatever it be, it is

Rom. 12.

3.

1 Cor. 8.

1.

2 Cor. 10

12.

1 Cor. 3.
18.

ready to make them think strange of the Apostles advice, *If any man seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a Fool, that he may be wise*; and it is to puffe them up, to influence their minds with a good conceit of themselves, and a contempt of others. Hence may we see some, when they have gotten a little skill in *Languages*, and through custome advantaged by the reading of some Books, are able readily to express some thoughts, perhaps not *originally* their own, presently conceit themselves to be so much wiser than the multitude of unlettered persons, that they are altogether impatient, that in any thing they should dissent from them: And this is a common frame with them whose *Learning* and *Wit* being their All, do yet reach but *half* way towards the useful ends of such things. Others also there are, and of them, not a few, who having been in the ways wherein the Skill and Knowledge mentioned are usually attained, yet through their *Incapacity* or Negligence, or some depraved Habit of Mind, or course of Life, have not really at all improved in them. And yet these also, having once attained the countenance of *Ecclesiastical Officers*, or Preferments, are as forward as any, to declaim against, and pretend a contempt of that Ignorance in others, which they are not so stupid, as not to know that the guilt of it may be reflected on themselves. However these things, at best, and in their highest improvement,

ment, are far enough from *solid Wisdom*; especially that which is from above, and which alone will promote the Peace and Edification of the Church. Some have no advantage by them, but that they can declare and speak out their own weakness; others that they can *rail*, and *lie*, and *falsly accuse*; in Words and Language wherewith they hope to please the vilest of men. And certain it is, that *Science*, which whatever it be without the Grace of God, is *but falsly so called*, and oftentimes falsly pretended unto, for this evil end of it alone is apt to lift up the minds of men above others, who perhaps come not behind them in any useful understanding. Yea, suppose men to have really attained a *singular degree* in useful knowledge and wisdom, and that either in things spiritual and divine, or in Learning and Sciences, or in Political prudence; yet Experience shews us, that an hurtful elation of mind is apt to arise from them, if the Souls of men be not well balanced with Humility, and this evil particularly watched against. Hence arise that Impatience of *Contradiction*, that Jealousie and tenderness of mens own Names and Reputations, those sharp revenges they are ready to take of any supposed Inroads upon them, or disrespectts towards them, that contempt & undervaluation of other mens Judgments, those *Magisterial Impositions* and censures which proceed from men under a Reputation of these Endowments. The Cautions

given us in the Scripture against this frame of Spirit, the Examples that are proposed unto us to the contrary, even that of *Christ himself*, the Commands that are multiplied for Lowliness of mind, Jealousie over our selves, the Sovereignty of God in chusing whom he pleaseth to reveal his Mind and Truth unto and by, may in the consideration of them be useful to prevent such Surprizals with *Pride*, Self-conceit, and contempt of others, as supposed or abused knowledge are apt to cast men into, whereby Divisions are greatly fomented and increased among us. But it may be these things will not much prevail with them, who pretending a Zeal and Principle above others in Preaching, and urging the *Examples of Christ*, do in most of their ways and actings, and in some of their Writings, give us an unparallel'd Representation of the Devil.

Lastly, It is confessed by all, that *False Teachers*, Seducers, Broachers of Novel Corrupt and *Heretical Doctrines*, have caused many Breaches and Divisions among such as once agreed in the Profession of the same Truths and Points of Faith: By means of such persons, whether within the present *Church-State*, or without, there is scarce any *Sacred Truth*, which had formerly secured its station and possession in the minds of the generality of Christians in this Nation, but what hath been solicited, or opposed. Some make their Errors the principal Foundation,

dation, Rule and Measure in Communion: Whoever complies with them therein, is of *them*; and whoso doth not, they avoid; so at once they shut up themselves from having any thing to do with them that *love Truth and Peace*. And where these consequents do not ensue, mens Zeal for their Errors being overballanced by their love of, and concern in their secular interest, and their minds influenced by the novel prevailing Opinion of a *great Indifferency* in all things appertaining unto Outward Worship; yet the advancing and fomenting of Opinions contrary unto that *Sound Doctrine* which hath been generally owned and taught by the Learned and Godly Pastors, and received by the People themselves, cannot but occasion Strife, Contentions, and Divisions among Professors. And it may be, there are very few of those *Articles* or Heads of Religion, which in the beginning of the Reformation, and a long time after, were looked on as the most *useful*, important and necessary parts of our Profession, that have not been among us variously opposed and corrupted. And in these *Differences about Doctrine*, be the hidden Causes of the Animosities whereby *those about Worship* and Discipline are managed. For those who have the advantage of Law and Power on their side in these lesser things, are not so *unwise* as to deal openly with their Adversaries about those things, wherein the Reputation of established and

commonly received Doctrines lie against them. But under the pretence and shelter of contending for Legal Appointments, not a few do exercise an Enmity against those who *profess the Truth*, which they think it not meet as yet openly to oppose.

Such are the *Causes*, and such are the *Occasions* of the Differences and Divisions in and about Religious Concerns, that are among us; by such means have they been formed and encreased: Heightned they have been by the personal faults and miscarriages of many of all sorts and parties. And as the reproof of their sinful failings is in its proper season a necessary duty; so no Reformation or Amendment of persons will give a full relief; nor free us from the evil of our Divisions, until the *Principles* and ways which occasion them, be taken out of the way.

CHAP. V.

Grounds and Reasons of Non-Conformity.

HAVING briefly declared our Sense concerning the general *Causes* and *Occasions* of our Differences, and that present want of Christian Love which is complained of by many; we shall now return to give some more particular account concerning our *Inconformity* unto, and Non-compliance with the Observances and Constitutions of the Church of *England*. It is acknowledged, that we do in sundry things dissent from them; that we do not, that we cannot come up unto a *joint Practice* with others in them. It is also confessed, that hereon there doth ensue an appearance of *Schisme* between them and us, according as the common notion of it is received in the world. And because in this distance and difference, the *Dissent* unto Compliance is on our parts; there is a semblance of a voluntary relinquishment of your Communion: And this we know exposeth us, in *Public Judgment* and Apprehensions, unto the Charge of *Schisme*, and necessitateth us unto self-defence; as though the only matter in question were, whether we are guilty of this evil or no. For that advantage have all Churches which have had an op-

portunity to *fix terms of Communion*, right or wrong, just or unequal; the Differences which ensue thereon, they will try out on no other terms, but only whether those that dissent from them, are *Schismaticks* or not. Thus they make themselves *Actors* oft-times in this Cause, who ought in the first place to be charged with *Injury*; and a Trial is made merely at the hazard of the Reputation of those, who are causelessly put upon their Purgation and Defence. Yea with many, a kind of *Possession* and *Multitude*, do render Dissenters unquestionably *Schismatical*; so that it is esteemed an unreasonable Confidence in them, to deny themselves so to be. So deals the Church of *Rome* with those that are Reformed. An *open Schisme* there is between them; and if they cannot sufficiently fix the Guilt of it on the *Reformed*, by confidence and clamours, with the advantage of Prepossession; yet, as if they they were perfectly innocent themselves, they will allow of no other Enquiry in this Matter, but what consists in calling the *Truth* and *Reputation* of the other Party, into question. It being our present condition to lie under this Charge from many, whose Interest it is to have us thought guilty thereof, we do deny that there is any *culpable secession made by us*, from the Communion of any that profess the Gospel in these Nations, or that the blame of the *appearing Schisme* that is among us, can duly or justly be reflected on us; which

which in the Remainder of our Discourse, we shall make to appear.

What are our Thoughts and Judgments, concerning the *Church-state* and *Interest* of the Professors of the Gospel in this Nation, we have before declared. And we hope they are such, that in the Judgment of persons sober and impartial, we shall be relieved from those clamorous Accusations, which are without number or measure, by some cast upon us. Our Prayers are also continually unto the *God of Love and Peace* for the taking away of all Divisions and their Causes from among us. Nor is the satisfaction which ariseth from our *sincerity* herein, in the least taken off, or rent from us, by the uncharitable Endeavours of some, to rake up pretences to the contrary. And should those, in whose *power* it is, think meet to imitate the *Pastors and Guides* of the Churches of old, and to follow them in any of the ways which they used for the Restauration of *Unity* and Agreement unto Christians, when lost or endangered, we should not decline the contribution of any assistance, by Counsel or Fraternal Compliance, which God should be pleased to supply us withal. But whilst some whose advantages render them considerable in these matters, seem to entertain no other Thoughts concerning us, but what issue in *Violence* and Oppression, the principal duty incumbent on us is, quietly to approve our Consciences unto God, that

that in *sincerity of heart* we desire in all things to please him, and to conform our Lives, Principles and Practises to his Will, so far as he is graciously pleased to make it known unto us. And as for men, we hope so to discharge the Duty required of us, as that none may justly charge us with any Disorders, *Unpeaceableness*, or other evils: For we do not apprehend that we are either the cause or culpable occasion of those Inconveniences and Troubles which some have put *themselves unto* by their endeavours for our disturbance, impoverishing and ruine. Let none imagine, but that we have considered the Evils, and evil Consequents of the *Schismes* and *Divisions* that are among us; and those who do so, do it upon the forfeiture of their Charity. We know how much the great work of *Preaching the Gospel* unto the Conversion of the Souls of men is impeded thereby; as also what prejudice ariseth thence against the Truth, wherein we are all agreed; with what Temptations, and mutual exasperations, to the loss of Love, and the occasioning of many sinful Miscarriages in persons of all sorts, do hereon ensue: But we deny that it is in *our power* to remove them, or take them out of the way, nor are we conscious unto our selves of any *Sin* or *Evil*, in what we do, or in what we do not do, by our not doing of it in the Worship of God: It is *Duty alone* unto Jesus Christ, whereunto in these things we attend, and wherein

l things therein we ought so to do. And where
 r Lives, matters of this nature are so circumstanced,
 so far as that *Duty* will contribute nothing towards
 known unity, we are at a loss for any progress to-
 be so towards it. The Sum of what is objected
 as that unto us, (as hath been observed) is our
 Disor- *Non-Conformity*, or our forbearance of actu-
 s: For al personal Communion with the present
 her the Church-Constitutions, in the Modes, Rites,
 unconve- and Ceremonies of its Worship: Hence the
 have *Schisme* complained of, doth ensue. Unless
 for our this Communion be *total*, constant, without
 e. Let endeavour of any Alteration or Reformati-
 sidered on, we cannot in the judgment of some, be
 of the freed from the guilt hereof. This we de-
 ng us; ny, and are perswaded that it is to be char-
 forfei- ged elsewhere: For,

First, All the Conditions of absolute and
 compleat Communion with the *Church of*
England, which are proposed unto us, and
 indispensibly required of us, especially as we
 are Ministers, are *Unscriptural*; such as the
 Word of God doth neither warrant, menti-
 on, nor intimate, especially not under any
 such consideration, as *necessary Conditions* of
 Communion in or among the Churches of
 Christ. We dispute not now about the
Lawfulness or *Unlawfulness* of things in
 themselves; nor whether they may be ob-
 served or no, by such as have no conviction
 of any Sin or Evil in them. Neither do we
 judge or censure them, by whom they are ob-
 served: Our Enquiry is solely about our
 own

own Liberty and Duty. And what concerneth them, is resolved into this one *Question* as to the Argument in hand: *Whether such Things or Observances in the Worship of God as are wholly unscriptural, may be so made an indispensable Condition of Communion with any particular Church; as that they by whom they are so made and imposed on others, should be justified in their so doing; and that if all Differences, Divisions or Schismes, do ensue thereon, the guilt and blame of them must necessarily fall on those who refuse submission to them, or to admit of them as such?* The Conditions proposed unto us, and imposed on us indispensably, if we intend to enjoy the Communion of this Church, are of this nature, we shall afterwards prove by an induction of Instances. Nor is it of any concernment in this matter, what place the things enquired after do hold, or are supposed to hold in the Worship of God; our present Enquiry is about their warranty to be made conditions of Church-Communion. Now we are perswaded that the Lord Christ hath set his Disciples at liberty from accepting of such terms of Communion from any Churches in the world: And on the same Grounds we deny, that he hath given or granted unto them Authority, to constitute such Terms and Conditions of their Communion, and indispensably to impose them upon all that enjoy it, according to their several capacities and concerns therein: For,

First,

First, The Rule of Communion among the
 Disciples of Christ in all his Churches, is in-
 herently established and fixed by himself. His
 Commission, Direction and Command, gi-
 ven out unto the first Planters and Founders
 of them, containing an obliging Rule unto
 all that should succeed them throughout all
 Generations, hath so established the Bounds,
 Limits and Conditions of Church-Communi-
 on, as that it is not lawful for any to attempt
 their Removal or Alteration. Goye, saith he *Mat. 28.*
 Go ye, and teach all Nations, Baptizing *19, 20.*
 them in the Name of the Father, and of the
 Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them
 to observe all things whatsoever I have command-
 ed you, and lo I am with you alwayes, even unto
 the end of the world. All the Benefits and
 Blessings, all the Comfort and use of Church-
 Assemblies and Communion, depends alone
 on the promise of the Presence of Christ
 with them. Thence doth all the Authority
 that may be exercised in them proceed; and
 thence doth the efficacy of what they do un-
 to the edification of the Souls of men, arise
 and flow. Now that any one may thus en-
 joy the Presence of Christ in any Church, with
 the Fruits and Benefits of it, no more can
 be required of him, but that through the
 Preaching of the Gospel, and Baptism, be-
 ing made a professed Disciple, he do, or be
 ready to do and observe all whatsoever
 Christ hath commanded. This hath he
 established as the Rule of Communion among
 his

Gal. 6. 1.

his Disciples and Churches in all Generations: In all other things which do relate unto the Worship of God, he hath set them, and left them at liberty, which so far as it is *Grant* and *Priviledge* purchased for them, they are obliged to make good and maintain. We know it will be here replied, that among the Commands of Christ, it is, that we should *hear the Church*, and *obey the Guides and Rulers thereof*: Whatever therefore is appointed by them, we are to submit unto, and observe, even by virtue of the Command of Christ. And indeed it is certainly true, that it is the Will and Command of the Lord Jesus, that we should both hear the Church, and obey the Guides of it: But by virtue of this Rule, neither the Church nor its Guides can make any thing necessary to the Disciples of Christ, as a condition of Communion with them, but only what he hath commanded. For the Rule here laid down is given unto those *Guides or Rulers*, who are thereby bound up, in the Appointments of what the Disciples are to observe, unto the Commands of Christ. And were a Command included herein, of obeying the Commands or Appointments of Church-Guides, and the promise of the *Presence of Christ* annexed thereunto; as he had given them all his own Power, and placed them in his Throne, so we had been all obliged to follow them whither ever they had carried or led us, although it were to *Hell it self*.

as some of the *Canonists*, on this Principle, have spoken concerning the *Pope*. Here therefore is a Rule of Communion fixed, both unto them that are to rule in the Church, and them that are to obey. And whereas, perhaps it may be said, that if the Rulers of the Church may appoint nothing in and unto the Communion of the Church, but what Christ hath himself commanded, then indeed is their Authority little worth, yea, upon the matter none at all: For the Commands of Christ are sufficiently confirmed and fixed by his own Authority; and to what end then serves that of the Rulers of the Church? We must say, that their whole Authority is limited in the Text, unto Teaching of men to observe what Christ hath commanded: And this they are to do with Authority; but under him, and in his Name; and according to the Rules that he hath given them. And those who think not this Power sufficient for them, must seek it elsewhere; for the Lord Christ will allow no more in his Churches.

To make this yet more evident, we may consider that particular Instance, wherein the Primitive Christians had a Trial, in the Case as now stated before us: And this was in the Matter of *Musical Ceremonies and Institutions*, which some would have imposed on them, as a condition of their Communion in the Profession of the Gospel: In the determination hereof, was their Liberty asserted

ed by the Apostles, and their Duty declared to abide therein. And this was the most specious Pretence of imposing on the *Liberty of Christians*, that ever they were exercised withal. For the Observation of these things had countenance given unto it, from their *Divine Original*, and the condescending Practice of the Apostles for a good season. That other Instances of the like nature should be condemned in the Scripture is impossible, seeing none had then endeavoured the Introduction of any of that Nature. But a *general Rule* may be established in the determination of one Case, as well as in that of many; provided it be not extended beyond what is eminently included in that case. Herein therefore was there a Direction given for the Duty and Practice of Churches in following Ages; and that in pursuit of the Law and Constitution of the Lord Christ before-mentioned. Neither is there any force in the Exception, that these things were imposed under a pretence of being *commanded by God himself*: For they say, to require any thing under that Notion, which indeed he hath not commanded, is an *Adding* to his Command, which ought not to be admitted: But to require things *Indifferent*, without that pretence, may be allowed. But as in the former way, men added unto the Commands of God *Formally*, so in this latter, they do it *Materially*, which also is prohibited: For in his Worship, we

are

are forbidden to adde to the things that he hath appointed, no less than to pretend commands from him which he hath not given. He therefore who professeth and pleaderh his willingness to *observe and do* in Church-communion, whatever Christ hath instituted and commanded, cannot regularly be refused the Communion of any Church, under any pretence of his refusal to do other things, which confessedly are not so required.

It is pleaded indeed, that no other things, as to the *Substance* of the Worship of God, can or ought to be appointed, besides what is instituted by Jesus Christ: But as to the *Manner* or *Modes* of the Performance of what he doth command, with other *Rites* and *Ceremonies* to be observed for *Order* and *Decency*, they may lawfully be instituted by the Rulers of the Church. Let it therefore at present be granted, that so they may be by them who are perswaded of the Lawfulness of those *Modes*, and of the things wherein they consist; seeing that is not the question at present under agitation. Neither will this Concession help us in our present Enquiry, unless it be also granted, that whatever may be *lawfully practised* in the worship of God, may be lawfully made a *necessary Condition* of Communion in that Worship: But this will not be granted, nor can it ever be proved. Besides, in our present Difference, this is only the Judgment of *one Party*, that the things mentioned may be

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Lawfully

Lawfully observed in and among Sacred Administrations: And thereon the Conclusion must be, that whatever *some* think may be lawfully practised in Divine Worship; may lawfully be made an indispensable condition of Communion unto the *whole*. Nor will it give force unto this Inference, that those who judge them lawful are the *Rulers* and *Guides* of the Church, unto whose determination the Judgment of private persons is not to be opposed: For we have shewed before, that a Judgment concerning what any one is to do or practise in the worship of God, belongs unto *every man* who is to do or practise ought therein; and he who makes it not, is blameth. And the Judgment which the Rulers of the Church are to make for the whole, or to go before it, is, in what is commanded, or not so, by Jesus Christ, not in what is fit to be added hereunto by themselves. Besides if it must be allowed that such things may be made the *conditions* of *Church-Communion*, then any who are in place of Authority, may multiply such conditions according unto the utmost extent of their Judgments, until they become burdensome and intolerable unto all, or really ridiculous in themselves, as it is fallen out in the *Church of Rome*: But this would prove expressly destructive unto that certain and *unvariable Rule of Church-Communion*, which the Lord Christ hath fixed and established, whereof we shall speak again afterward.

Neither

Neither will that Plea, which is by some insisted on in this case, yield any so id or universal relief. It is said, that *some may warrantably and duly observe in the Worship of God, what is unduly and unwarrantably imposed on them by others.* And indeed all Controversies about Church Constitution, Discipline, and external Worship, are by *some* reduced unto these two Heads; that the *Magistrate* may appoint what he pleaseth, and the *People* may observe whatever he appoints: For as there is no Government of the Church determined in the Scripture, it is meet it should be erected and disposed by the supreme *Magistrate*, who, no doubt, upon that supposition, is only fit and qualified so to do: And for *outward worship*, and the Rites thereof, both it and they are so far *indifferent*, as that we may comply with whatever is imposed on us; whether they be good, or useful, or evil, lies at the doors of others to answer about. But this seems to rise up in express *contradiction* unto those Commands which are given us, to *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*; and in these things, *not to be servants of men*. For what do we do less, than renounce the Priviledge of our Liberty purchased for us at an high rate and Price, or what are we less than *Servants of Men*, whilst we bring our selves in bondage unto the observation of such things in the worship of God, as we judge neither commanded

by him, nor tending unto our own Edification, but meerly because by them ordained? Moreover, suppose it be the Judgment of some, as it is of many, that the things mentioned, though in their own nature indifferent, do become *unlawful* unto them to observe when imposed as necessary conditions of all Church-Communion, contrary to the command and appointment of Christ? We know this is exceedingly *declaimed against* as that which is perverse and froward. For what, say many, can be more unreasonable, than that things in *their own nature indifferent* should become *unlawful* because they are commanded? But it is at least no less unreasonable, that things *confessedly indifferent* should not be left so, but be rendred necessary unto practise, though useles in it, by arbitrary commands. But the opinion traduced, is also much mistaken. For although it be granted that the things themselves are *indifferent* in their own nature, not capable, but as determined by circumstances, of either moral good or evil; yet it is not granted that the observation of them, even as *uncommanded*, is indifferent in the Worship of God. And although the command doth not alter the Nature, and make that which was indifferent become *evil*, yet that command of its self being contrary to many divine commands and instructions given us in the Scripture, a compliance with the things commanded therein may become unlawful to us. And what shall they do whose judgment this is? shall they admit of them

as *lawful*, upon the consideration of that change about them, which renders them *unlawful*? This they will not easily be induced to give their assent unto.

Let therefore the Rule of Church Communion be observed which our Lord Jesus Christ hath fixed; and no small occasion of our strifes and divisions will be removed out of the way. But whilst there is this contest among us, If one pleads his readiness *to do and observe whatever the Lord Christ hath commanded*, and cannot be convinced of insincerity in his profession, or of want of understanding in any known Institution of his, and thereon requires the Communion of any Church; but others say nay, you shall observe and do sundry other things that *we our selves have appointed*, or you shall have no communion with us: as it cannot be but that Divisions and *Schisms* will ensue thereon; so it will not be difficult for an indifferent by-stander, to judge on whether side the occasion and guilt of them doth remain.

Secondly, We have the *Præfise* of the Apostles in the pursuance of the Direction and Command of their Lord and ours, for our Guide in this Case. And it may be well and safely thought, that this should give a certain Rule unto the proceedings and actings of all Church-Guides in future Ages. Now they did never make any thing *unscriptural*, or what they had not received by *divine Revelation*, to be a condition of Communion in Religious Worship & Church Order among Christians.

17.6.4. For as they testified of themselves, that *they*
would continually give themselves unto prayer,
and the Ministry of the word ; so it was of
 old observed concerning them, that their
 constant labour was for the good of the souls
 of men in their conversion unto God, and
 edification in faith and holiness ; but as for
 the *Institution of Festivals or Fasts, of Rites or*
Ceremonies to be observed in the Worship of
 the Churches, they intermeddled with no such
 things. And thence it came to pass, that in
 the first entrance and admission of *Observances*
 about such things, there was a great and
 endless variety in them, both as to the things
 themselves observed, and as to the manner of
 their observation. And this was gradually
 increased unto such an height and excess, as
 that the *burden* of them became intolerable
 unto Christendome. Nor indeed could any
 better success be expected in a relinquishment
 and departure from the Pattern of Church
 Order, given us in their example and practise.
 Neither is the Plea from hence built meerly
 on this consideration, that no man alive, ei-
 ther from their Writings, or the approved
 Records of those Times, can manifest that they
 ever prescribed unto the Churches, or impos-
 ed on them the observance of any *uninstituted*
Rite, to be observed as a measure and Rule
 of their Communion ; but also it so fell out
 in the good providence of God, that the *Case*
 under debate, was proposed unto them, and
 joyntly determined by them. For being cal-
 led unto advice and counsel, in the case of the
 disse-

difference that was between the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Converts, and Professors, wherein the former laboured to impose on the latter the observation of *Moses Institutions*, as the condition of their joynt Communion, as was mentioned even now, they not only determine against any such *Imposition*, but also expressly declare that nothing but necessary things (that is, such as are so from other Reasons antecedently unto their Prescriptions and Appointments) ought to be required of any Christians, in the Communion or Worship of the Church. And as they neither did nor would on that great occasion, in that *Seleucia Assembly*, appoynt any *one thing* to be observed by the Disciples and Churches which the Lord Christ had not commanded; so in their Direction given unto the *Gentile* Believers for a temporary abstinence from the use of their Liberty in one or two Instances whereunto it did extend, they plainly *intimate*, that it was the avoydance of a *present Scandal*, which might have greatly retarded the progress of the Gospel, that was the reason of that Direction. And in such Cases it is granted, that we may in many things for a season forgo the use of our Liberty. This was their way and Practise, this the *Example* which they left unto all that should follow them in the Rule and Guidance of the Church. Whence it is come to pass in After-Ages, that men should think themselves *wiser* than they, or more careful to provide for the peace and unity of the Church, we know not. But let the bounds and mea-

sures of Church Communion fixed in and by
 their *Example*, stand unmoved, and many
 causes of our *present Divisions* will be taken
 away. But it may be it will be offered, that
 the *Present state of things* in the World, re-
 quires some alteration in, or variation from
 the precise *Example* of the Apostles in this
 matter. The due observation of the Instituti-
 ons of Christ in such manner as the nature of
 of them required, was then sufficient unto the
 Peace and Unity of the Churches. But *Pri-*
mitive Simplicity is now decayed amongst the
 most; so that a multiplication of Rules and
 Observances is needful for the same ends.
 But we have shewed before, that the *Accom-*
modation of Church Rule and Communion to
 the *Degeneracy of Christians* or Churches, or
 their Secular Engagements, is no way advan-
 tagious unto Religion. Let them whose Duty
 it is, endeavour to reduce Professors and Pro-
 fession to the *Primitive Standard* of Light,
 Humility, and Holiness, and they may be or-
 dered in all Church concerns, according to
 the *Apostolical* Pattern. Wherefore when
 Christians unto the former Plea of their rea-
 diness to *observe, and do*, whatsoever Christ
 hath commanded them, do also adde their
 willingness to comply with whatever the *Apo-*
stles of Christ have either by *Precept*, or
Example in their own practise, commended
 unto them, or did do or require in the first
 Churches, and cannot be convinced of failing
 to make good their Profession; we do not
 know whence any can derive a Warranty
 enabling

enabling them to impose any other *conditions of communion* on them. The *Institution* therefore of the Lord Christ, and the *Practise* of the Apostles, lye directly against the imposing of the conditions enquired about. And first to *invent* them, then to *impose* them, making them necessary to be observed, and then to judge and censure them as *Schismatics*, as enemies to Love and Peace, who do not submit unto them, looks not unlike the exercise of an unwarrantable *Dominion* over the Faith and Consciences of the Disciples of Christ.

Thirdly, not only by their Example and Practice, but they have also *Doctrinally* declared, what is the Duty of Churches, and what is the Liberty of Christians in this matter. The Apostle Paul discourseth at large hereon; *Rom. 14. 15. Chap.* The attentive Reading of those *two Chapters*, is sufficient to determine this Cause among all uninterested and unprejudiced Persons. He supposeth in them, and it is the Case which he exemplifies in sundry Instances, that there were among Christians and Churches at that time, different *Apprehensions* and *Observances* about some things appertaining unto the worship of God: And these things were such, as had some seeming Countenance of a Sacred and *Divine Authority*, for such was their Original Institution. Some in the consideration hereof, judged that they were still to be observed; and their *Consciences* had been long exercised in an holy subjection unto the Authority of God in the Observance of them. Nor

was

was there yet any exprefs and Positive Lawe
 enacted for their Abrogation; but the cea-
 sing of any Obligation unto their Observance
 from their *Primitive Institution*, was to be
 gathered from the nature of Gods *Oconomy*
 towards his Church. Many therefore con-
 tinued to observe them, esteeming it their
 Duty so to do. Others were perswaded and
 satisfied that they were freed from any Obliga-
 tion unto the owning and observance of
 them. And whereas this *Liberty* was given
 them by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, they
 were resolved to make use of it, and not to
 comply with the other sort, who pressed
Conformity upon them in their Ceremonies
 and Modes of Divine worship. So it may
 fall out in other Instances. Some may be
 perswaded, that such or such things may
 be *Lawful* for them to observe in the worship
 of God; they may be so unto them, and, as
 supposed, in their own Nature. On the Con-
 sideration of some Circumstances they may
 judg that it is *convenient* or expedient to at-
 tend unto their Observance; Lastly all *Coin-*
cidencies weighed, that it is *necessary* that so
 they should do; and that others also that
 walk with them in the Profession of the Gos-
 pel should conform themselves unto their
 Order and Practice. On the other hand some
 there are, who because the things of the joyne-
 practice required, are not appointed by *Jesus*
Christ, nor doth it appear unto them, that
 he hath given Power unto any others to ap-
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ve Lawe point them, do not judg it *expedient*, nor yet,
 the ceall Circumstances considered, *Lawful* to ob-
 fervationerve them. Now whereas this *Case* answers
 as to be unto that before proposed, the Determina-
Oeconom tion thereof given by the Apostle, may safe-
 fore con be applied unto this also. What Rule
 it their therefore doth he give therein, which he
 aded and would have attended unto, as the means for
 ny Obl the Preservation of Love, Peace, and Unity
 vance among them? Is it that the former sort of
 as given Persons, provided they be the most, or have
 el, they the most Power, ought to impose the Practice
 d not to of those things which they esteem *Lawful* and
 pressed *Convenient*, on those who *judg them not so*;
 emonies when it is out of Question, that they are not
 it may appointed by Christ; only it is pretended
 may be that they are not forbidden by him? Where
 gs may indeed the *Question* was about the Instituti-
 worship ons of Christ, he binds up the Churches pre-
 nd, as cisely unto what he had received from him.
 he Con But in cases of this nature, wherein a direct *1 Cor. II.*
 ey may command of Christ cannot be pleaded nor *23.*
 t to a is pretended, he absolutely rejects and con-
 ll Coin demns all thoughts of such a procedure. But
 that so supposing, that Differences in Judgment and
 lso that Practice were and would be among Christians,
 e Gol the Sum of his Advice is, that all Offences
 o their and *Scandals* ought to be diligently avoi-
 d some ded; that *censuring*, *judging*, and despisings
 joyn on the account of such Differences, be cast out;
 y *tism* that *tendernefs* be used towards them that are
 n, that weak, and nothing severely prest on them
 s to ap that *Doubt*; and for their different Appre-
 point heptions

hensions and Ways, they should all walk in Peace, condescending unto, and bearing with one another. Nothing can more evidently determine the *unlawfulness* of imposing upon Christians unscriptural Conditions of Communion, than do the Discourses of that Great Apostle to this Purpose. Yea better it is, and more agreeable unto the mind of Christ, that Persons and particular Churches, should be left unto different Observations in such things relating unto Sacred worship, wherein they cannot joyn with each other, nor communicate together, endeavouring in the meantime to keep the *Unity of the spirit in the bond of Peace*; than that they should be inforced unto an *Uniformity* in the Practice of things that have not the immediate Authority of Christ enstamped on them. Accordingly so fell out among them unto whom the Apostle gave these Directions, and that suitably unto his Intention in them. For the *Dissenting Parties*, agreeing in the common Faith and Profession of the Gospel, did yet constantly meet in *distinct Assemblies or Churches*, for the Celebration of Holy worship, because of the different Rites wherein they did not agree. And in this *Posture* were Peace and Love continued among them, until in process of Time, their Differences through mutual forbearance being extinguished, they Coalesced into one Church state and Order: And the former *Peace* which they had in their Distances, was deemed sufficient, whilst things were

all walk were not measured nor regulated by secular
 interest or Advantages. But it is a part of
 our present unhappiness, that *such a Peace* a-
 mong Christians and particular Churches, is
 mistaken to have an ill Aspect upon the con-
 cerns of some belonging unto the Church in
 Power, Honour, and Revenue. But as we
 apprehend there is, as things are now stated
 among us, a plain *mistake* in this surmize,
 so if the *Glory* of God, and the *Honour* of the
 Gospel were chief in our Consultations about
 Church Affairs, it would be with us of no
 such consideration, as to hinder us from com-
 mitting quietly the success and events of duty
 unto the Providence of God.

Fourthly, There was also a signal Vindi-
 cation of the Truth pleaded for, in an *In-
 stance of Fact* among the Primitive Churches.
 There was an opinion which prevailed very
 early among them, about the necessary ob-
 servation of *Easter*, in the room of the *Jewish
 Passover*; for the solemn commemoration
 of the Death and Resurrection of our Savi-
 our: And it was taken for granted by most
 of them, that the observance hereof was
 countenanced, if not rendred *necessary* unto
 them, by the example of the Apostles: For
 they generally believed that by them it was
 observed, and that it was their Duty to ac-
 commodate themselves unto their practise;
 only there was a difference about the *precise
 Time* or Day, which they were to solemnize,
 as the Head and Rule of their Festival; as
 every

every undue presumption hath one *Lament* or other accompanying it : It is Truth alone which is square and steady. Some therefore pleaded the example of *John* the Apostle and Evangelist, who as it was strongly asserted and testified by multitudes, kept his *Easter* such a time, and by such a Rule, whom they thought meet to follow and imitate. Others, not inferiour unto them in number or Authority, opposed unto their Time the example of *Peter*, whom they affirmed (on what grounds and Reasons they know best, for they are now lost) to have observed his *Easter* at another Time, and according unto a different Rule. And it is scarcely imaginable how the Contentests hereabouts troubled the Churches both of *Europe* and *Asia*; who certainly had things more material to have exercised themselves about. The Church of *Rome* embraced that Opinion, which at length prevailed over the other, and obtained a kind of *Catholicisme* against that which was countenanced only by the Authority of *St. John*; as that Church was alwayes wondrous happy in reducing other Churches unto an acquiescency in its sentiments, as seldom wanting *force* or *skill* dexterously to improve its manifold advantages. Now this was that *Easter*, to be celebrated on the *Lords Day* only, and not by the Rule of the *Jewish Passover*, on the 14 day of the first month, what day of the week soever it fell out upon. Hereon *Vilfor* the *Bishop* of that Church, being confident that the Truth was on his

side,

side, namely that *Easter* was to be observed on the *Lords Day*, resolved to make it a *Condition of Communion* unto all the Churches; for otherwise he saw not how there could be either Union, Peace, or Uniformity among them. He did not question but that he had a good Foundation to build upon: For that *Easter* was to be observed by virtue of *Apostolical Tradition*, was generally granted by all. And he took it as unquestionable upon a current and prevalent *Rumor*, that the observation of it was confined to the *Lords day* by the example of *St. Peter*. Hereupon he refused the Communion of all that would not conform unto his resolution for the observation of *Easter* on the *Lords day*; and cast out of Communion all those Persons and Churches, who would observe any other day; which proved to be the condition of the principal Churches of *Asia*, amongst whom the Apostle *John* did longest converse. Here was our present case directly exemplified, or represented so long before hand; the *Succession* of this fact of his, remaineth to be enquired into. Now it is known unto all what entertainment this his *new Rule of Communion* found among the Churches of Christ. The Reproof of his Precipitancy, and irregular fixing *new bounds* unto Church Communion, was famous in those days: Especially the *Rebuke* given unto him, and his practise, by one of the most Holy and Learned Persons then

then living, is eminently celebrated, as consonant to Truth and Peace, by those who have transmitted unto us the *Reports* of those Times. He who himself first condemned others rashly, was for his so doing generally condemned by all. Suppose now that any Persons living at *Rome*, and there called into Communion with the Church, should have had the condition thereof proposed unto them, namely that they should *assent and declare, that the observation of Easter by Apostolical Tradition was to be on the Lords day only*; and upon their refusal so to do, should be excluded from Communion, or on their own accords should refrain from it; where should the Guilt of this Disorder and *Schism* be charged? And thus it fell out, not only with those who came out of *Asia* to *Rome*, who were not received by that *Diotrephes*; but also with sundry in that Church its self, as *Blastus* and others; as what great Divisions were occasioned hereby between the *Saxons* and *Brittains*, hath been by many declared. But in the Judgment of the primitive Churches, the Guilt of these *Schisms*, was to be charged on them that coyned and imposed these new *Rules* and *Conditions* of Communion. And had they not been judged by any, the pernicious consequences of this temerarious Attempt are sufficient to reflect no inconsiderable Guilt upon it. Neither could the whole *Observance* its self, from first to last, ever compensate that loss of Love and Peace

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among Christians, and Churches, which was occasioned thereby; Nor hath the Introduction of such things ever obtained any better success in the Church of God. How free the Churches were untill that time, after they were once delivered from the Attempt of the *Circumcised Professors* to impose upon them the Ceremonies of *Moses*, from any appearance of unwritten Conditions of Communion, is manifest unto all, who have looked into the Monuments which remain of those times. It is very true, that sundry Christians took upon them very early, the Observation of *sundry Rites* and Usages in Religion, whereunto they had no Guidance or Direction by the word of God. For as the corrupted Nature of Man, is prone to the Invention and use of sensible present things in Religion, especially where Persons are not able to find satisfaction in those that are *purely spiritual*, requiring great intention of mind and Affections in their Exercise; so were they many of them easily infected by that Tincture which remained in them from the *Judaisme* or *Gentilism* from which they were converted. But these observances were *free*, and taken up by Men of their own accord; not only every Church, but every Person, in the most of them, as far as it appears, being left unto their own Liberty. Some *Ages* it was before such things were turned into Laws and *Canons*; and that perhaps first by *Hereticks*, or at least under such a Degeneracy, as our
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minds and Consciences cannot be regulated by. The Judgment therefore and Practice of the *first Churches* are manifest against such Impositions.

Fifthly, upon a supposition that it should be Lawful for any Persons or Churches to assign *unscriptural Conditions* of their Communion, it will follow, that there is no *certain Rule of Communion* amongst Christians fixed and determined by Christ. That this is otherwise, we have before declared, and shall now only manifest the evil Consequences of such a Supposition. For if it be so, no Man can claim an *Admission* into the Society or Communion of any Church, or a Participation in the Ordinances of the Gospel with them, by vertue of the *Authority* of Jesus Christ. For notwithstanding all his Pleas, of submission to his Institutions, and the *Observation of his Commands*, every Church may propose something, yea many things unto him, that he hath not appointed, without an admission whereof, and subjection thereunto, he may be *usely excluded* from all Church Priviledges among them. Now this seems not consonant unto the Authority that Christ hath over the Church, nor that Honour which ought to be given unto him therein. Nor on the same supposition are his Laws sufficient to rule and quiet the *Consciences*, or to provide for the Edification of his Disciples. Now if *Diotrephes* is blamed, for not receiving the *Brethren*, 3 *Joh. 9.* who were *recommended* unto the Church by the

the Apostle, probably because they would not submit to that *pre-eminence* which he had obtained among them; they will scarcely escape without reproof, who refuse those whom the Lord Christ commends unto them by the *Rules of the Gospel*, because they will not submit unto such new Impositions as by vertue of their *Pre-eminence* they would put upon them. And what endless Perplexities they must be cast into, who have learned in these things to call him *only Lord and Master*, is apparent unto all. Baptism, with a voluntary credible *Profession* of Faith, Repentance and Obedience unto the Lord Christ in his Commands and Institutions, is all the warranty which he hath given unto any of his Disciples, to claim their Admission into his Churches, which are instituted and appointed to receive them, and to build them up in their Faith. And if any Person who produceth this *warranty*, and thereon desireth, according to order, the Communion of any Church; if he may be excluded from it, or forbidden an entrance into it, unless it be on grounds sufficient in the Judgment of Charity to evince the falseness and hypocrisie of his *Profession*, little regard is had to the Authority of Christ, and too much unto Mens own. Churches indeed may more or less insist upon the Explicitness of this *Profession*, and the Evidences of its sincerity, as they find it tend to their Peace and Edification, with a due Attendance unto the *Rule* and *Example* left unto them in

this matter, in the Gospel. And that the exercise of this Power in any Churches may not turn to the *Prejudice* of any, every Professor is allowed, with reference unto particular Assemblies, to make his choice of the *Measure* he will comply withal; at least if he will make the choice of his habitation subservient unto his Edification. Hereby the Peace and Duty, both of Churches and private Persons are secured. And this Rule of Church Admission and Communion, furnished Christians with Peace, Love and Unity for *many Ages*, setting aside the *Ruffle* given them in the rashness of *Victor* before mentioned. It was also rendred *practicable* and easie, by vertue of their Communion as Churches among themselves: For from thence, *Commendatory Letters*, supplied the Room of actual Profession in them who having been admitted into one Church, did desire the same Priviledge in any other. And on this Rule were Persons to be received, though

- Ro. 14. 1.* *weak in the Faith*, though it may be in some things *otherwise minded* than the generality of the Church, though *babes*, and *unskilful*, as
- Phil. 3. 15.* to degrees, in the word of Truth. But this
- He. 5. 12* Rule was alwayes attended with a Proviso,
- 13, 14.* that men did not contradict, or destroy their own Profession by an unholy Conversation: For such Persons never were, nor ever are to be admitted unto the especial Ordinances of the Church; and a neglect of due Attendance hereunto, is that which principally hath cast

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us into all our Confusions, and rendred the Institutions of Christ ineffectual. And if this *warranty* which the Lord Christ hath given unto his Disciples, of claiming a Participation in all the Priviledges of his Churches, and an Admission unto a joynt-performance of all the Duties required in them, may, upon the supposition of a Power left to *impose other Conditions* of Communion on them, be rejected and rendred useles, all Church Communion is absolutely resolved into the variable wills of Men. The Church no doubt may judge and determine upon the *Laws of Christ*, and their due Application unto particular Occasions; as whether such Persons may according to them be admitted into their Fellowship. To deprive Churches of this Liberty, is to take away their Principal Use and service. But to *make Laws of their own*, the subject matter whereof shall be things not commanded by Christ, & to make them the *Rule* of admitting professed Christians unto their Communion, is an Assumption that cannot be justified. And it is certain, that the assuming of an Authority by some Churches for such like Impositions, is that which hath principally occasioned many to deny them *so to be*; so at once to overthrow the foundation of all that Authority, which in so many Instances they find to be abused. And although the Church of *Rome* may prevail on weak and credulous Persons, by proposing unto them an absolute Acquiescency in their Dictates and Determinations,

nations, as the best, readiest and most facile means of satisfaction; yet there is nothing that doth more alienate wise and conscientious persons from them, than doth that unreasonable Proposal. Moreover, it is highly probable that *endless Disputes* will arise on this supposition, about what is *meet and convenient*, and what not, to be added unto the Scripture-Rules of Communion. They have done so in the Ages past, and continue yet so to do. Nor can any man on this Principle know, or probably conjecture, when he hath a *firm station* in the Church, or an indefensible interest in the Privileges thereof. For supposing that he hath concocted the *Impositions of one Church*, on the first removal of his habitation, he may have new conditions of communion prescribed unto him. And from this perplexity nothing can relieve him, but a resolution to do in every place whereunto he may come, according to the *manner of the place*, be it good or bad, right or wrong. But neither hath the Lord Christ left his Disciples at this *Uncertainty* which the Case supposeth; nor will accept of that *Indifferency* which is in the Remedy suggested. They therefore who regulate their Communion with any Churches, by the firm stated Law of their Right and Privilege, if they are not received thereon, do not by their *abstinence* from it, contract the Guilt of Schisme or any blamable Division.

Moreover, upon a supposition of such a Liberty

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berty and Power to prescribe and impose un-
 written conditions of Church-communion
 on Christians, who, or what Law doth, or
 shall prescribe *bounds* unto men, that they
 do not proceed in their Prescriptions, beyond
 what is useful unto edification, or unto what
 will be really burdensome and intolerable un-
 to Churches. To say that those who claim
 this *Power* may be securely trusted with it,
 for they will be sure not to fall into any such
 Excesses, will scarcely give satisfaction: For
 besides that such a kind of Power is exceed-
 ingly apt to swell and extend it self *unmea-*
surably, the common Experience of Christen-
 dom lies against this Suggestion. Was not an
 Excess of this kind complained of by *Austin*
 of old, when yet the observation of *Ecclesi-*
astical Customs was much more voluntary
 than in after Ages; neither were they made
 absolutely conditions of communion, unless
 among a very few? Do not all *Protestants*
 grant and plead that the *Papal Church* hath
 exceeded all bounds of moderation and So-
 briety herein; so that from thence they take
 the principal warranty of their secession
 from it? Do not other Churches mutually
 charge one another on the same account?
 Hath not a charge of this *Excess* been the
 Ball of Contention in this Nation ever since
 the Reformation? If then there be such a
 Power in any, either the exercise of it is con-
 fined unto certain Instances by some power
superior unto them. or it is left absolutely, as

unto all Particulars whereunto it may be extended, unto their own Prudence and Discretion. The first will not be asserted, nor can be so, unless the Instances intended can be recounted, and the *confirming power* be declared. If the latter be affirmed, then let them run into what *Excesses* they please, unless they judge themselves that so they do, which is morally impossible that they should, none ought ever to complain of what they do: For there is no failure in them who attend unto *their Rule*; which in this case is supposed to be mens own Prudence and Discretion. And this was directly the state of things in the Church of *Rome*; whence they thought it alwayes exceedingly unequal that any of their *Ecclesiastical Laws* should be called in question; since they made them according to their own Judgment, the sole Rule of exercising their Authority in such things. Where is the certainty and stability of this Rule? Is it probable that the communion and peace of all Churches, and all Christians, are left to be regulated by it? And who will give assurance, that no *one Condition* directly unlawful in it self shall be prescribed and imposed by persons enjoying this pretended power? Or who can undertake that the number of such Conditions as may be countenanced by a Plea of being things in their own nature *indifferent*, shall not be increased until they come to be such a burden and yoke, as are too heavy for the Disciples of Christ to bear, and unlawful for them to submit themselves unto?

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May any make a Judgment but themselves, who impose them, when the number of such things grows to a blameable excess? If others may judge, at least for themselves, & their own practice, and so of what is lawful or not, it is all that is desired. If themselves are the *only Judges*, the case seems very hard, and our secession from the *Church of Rome* scarcely warrantable. And who sees not what endless Contests and Differences will ensue on these Suppositions, if the whole Liberty of mens judgments, and all apprehensions of Duty in Professors, be not swallowed up in the Gulph of *Atheistical Indifference*, as to all the Concerns of outward worship.

The whole of what hath been pleaded on this Head, might be confirmed with the testimony of many of the Learned writers of the Church of *England*, in the defence of our Secession from that of *Rome*. But we shall not here produce them in particular. The sum of what is pleaded by them, is, *That the Being of the Catholick Church lies in Essentials; that for a particular Church to disagree from all other particular Churches in some extrinsecal and accidental things, is not to separate from the Catholick Church, so as to cease to be a Church; but still whatever Church makes such extrinsecal things the necessary conditions of Communion, so as to cast men out of the Church, who yield not to them, is Schismatical in its so doing, and the Separation from it is so far from being Schisme, that being cast out of*

that Church on those terms only, returns them unto the Communion of the Catholick Church. And nothing can be more unreasonable, than that the Society imposing such conditions of communion, should be Judge whether those conditions be just and equitable or no. To this purpose do they generally plead our common Cause. Wherefore, from what hath been discoursed, we doubt not but to affirm, that where *unscriptural conditions* of communion, indispensibly to be submitted unto and observed, are by any Church imposed on those whom they expect or require to joyn in their Fellowship, Communion and Order; if they on whom they are so imposed, do thereon with-hold or withdraw themselves from the communion of that Church, especially in the Acts, Duties and Parts of Worship, wherein a submission unto these conditions is expressed either *verbally* or *virtually*, they are not thereon to be esteemed guilty of *Schisme*; but the whole fault of the Divisions which ensue thereon, is to be charged on them who insist on the necessity of their Imposition.

That this is the condition of things with us at present, especially such as are *Ministers of the Gospel*, with reference unto the Church of England, as it is known in its self, so it may be evidenced unto all, by an enumeration of the *Particulars* that are required of us, if we will be comprehended in the Communion and Fellowship thereof.

For 1. It is indispensibly enjoyned that we
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e a solemn Attestation unto the Liturgy, and
 contained in it, by the subscription or decla-
 ration of our Assent and Consent thereunto;
 which must be accompanied with the constant
 use of it in the whole Worship of God. As
 has before observed, we dispute not now a-
 bout the Lawfulness of the use of *Liturgies*,
 the publick Service of the Church; nor
 that in particular which is established a-
 mong us by the Laws of the Land. Were it
 only proposed, or recommended unto Mini-
 sters for the use of it in whole or in part, ac-
 cording as it should be found needful unto the
 edification of their people, there would be a
 great Alteration in the case under considera-
 tion. And if it be pretended, that such a Li-
 berty would produce great diversity, yea and
 confusion in the Worship of God, we can on-
 ly say, that it did not so of old, when the
 Pastors of Churches were left wholly to the
 exercise of their own *Gifts* and *Abilities* in all
 sacred Administrations. But it is the making
 of an Assent and Consent unto it, with the
 constant use of it, or attendance unto it, a
 necessary condition of all Communion with the
 Church, which at present is called into que-
 stion. It will not, we suppose, be denied, but
 that it is so made unto us all, both Ministers and
 People; and that by such Laws both *Civil*
 and *Ecclesiastical*, as are sufficiently severe in
 their Penalties. For we have Rules and Mea-
 sures of Church-communion assigned unto
 us, by Laws meerly *Civil*. Were there any
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colour or pretence of denying this to be so, we should proceed no farther in this Instance but things are evidently and openly with- as here laid down. [Now this *condition of communion is unscriptural*; and the making of to be such a condition, is without warranty or countenance from the word of God, or the practice of the Apostolical and Primitive Churches. That there are no footsteps of any *Liturgy*, or prescribed Forms for the administration of all Church-Ordinances to be imposed on the the Disciples of Christ in their Assemblies, to be found in the Scripture, no intimation of any such thing, no direction about it, no command for it, will, we suppose, be acknowledged. Commanded indeed we are to *make Prayers* and supplications for all sorts of men in our Assemblies, to instruct, lead, guide, and feed the Flock of Christ, to administer the holy Ordinances instituted by him, and to do all these things *decently and in order*. The Apostles also describing the work of the Ministry in their own attendance unto it, affirm that they would *give themselves continually unto Prayer and the Ministry of the Word*. But that all these things should be done (the Preaching of the word only excepted) in and by the use or reading of a *Liturgy*, and the prescribed Forms of it, without variation or receding from the Words and Syllables of it in any thing, that the Scripture is utterly silent of. If any one be otherwise minded, it is incumbent

1 Tim. 2.

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Acts 20.

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1 Pet. 5.

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Act. 6.4.

on him to produce Instances unto his
 purpose. But withall he must remember,
 that in this case it is required not only to pro-
 duce a *warranty* from the Scripture for the
 use of such Forms or *Liturgies*, but also that
 such Rules are given therein, enabling Churches
 to make the constant attendance unto them, to
 be a necessary condition of their communion.
 If this be not done, nothing is offered unto
 the Case as at present stated. And whatever
 confidence may be made use of herein, we
 know that nothing unto this purpose can be
 evidence produced. It is pleaded indeed that
 our Saviour himself composed a *Form of Pray-*
er, and prescribed it unto his Disciples: But
 it is not proved that he enjoined them the
 constant use of it in their *Assemblies*, nor that
 they did so use it, nor that the repetition of
 it should be a *condition of communion* in them,
 though the owning of it as by him proposed,
 and for the Ends by him designed, may just-
 ly be made so; least of all is it, or can it be
 proved, that any Rule or just encourage-
 ment can hence be taken for other men, who
 are neither *Jesus Christ* nor his *Apostles*, but
 weak and fallible as our selves, to compose
 new *Liturgies*, and impose the necessary
 use of them in all the worship of the
 Church.

Neither is there the least countenance to be
 obtained unto such Impositions, from the pra-
 ctise or example of the *first Churches*. *Litur-*
gies themselves were an Invention of after-
 Ages,

Ages, and the *use* of them now enquired after of a much later date. For those which pretend unto *Apostolical antiquity*, have long since been convicted to be spurious and feigned. Nor is there scarce any Learned man who hath the confidence to assert them to be genuine. And on a supposition that *so they are*, no tollerable reason can be given why the use of them should be neglected, and such others taken up as are of a most uncertain Original. The first condition therefore of communion proposed unto us, is not only *unscriptural* which is sufficient unto our present Argument, but also destitute of any ancient Example or Usage among the Churches of Christ, to give countenance unto it. This we admit not of, if we attend not unto what we are not only *refused communion* in other things, but also *excommunicated* or cast out of the whole communion of the Church, as many are at this day; yet some are so, not only for refusing compliance with the whole of it in general; but for not observing every particular Direction belonging unto it (as might be manifested in Instances) of no great importance. If therefore any Divisions or *Schismes* do ensue among us on this account; that some indispenibly require an *Assent* and *Consent* unto the *Liturgy*, and all things contained in it, as the condition of compleat Church-communion, or a necessary *attendance* on the whole Religious worship thereby performed, and therein

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prescribed, which others refuse to admit of as such, and thereon *forbear the communion* proposed unto them; it is evident from the Rules laid down, where the guilt of them is to be charged. And we do not discourse of what any may do among themselves, judging it meet for their *edification*, nor of what a *Civil Law* may constitute with respect unto publick places, Employments and Preferments, but only where lies the sin, and evil, that attends *Divisions* arising on these Impositions, and which, by their removal, would be taken away. And there seems to be an aggravation of this *Disorder*, in that not only all men are refused *communion*, who will not submit unto these Terms of it; but also they are *sought out* and exposed unto severe Penalties, if they will not admit of them, though expressly contrary to their Consciences and Perswasions.

2. *Canonical Submission* unto the present Ecclesiastical Government of the Church, and the Administration of the Discipline thereof, in their hands by whom the Power of it is possessed, with an Acquiescency therein, are to the same purpose required of us, and expected from us. Who these are, and what are the Wayes and Means of their Administrations, we shall not repeat, as unwilling to give offence unto any. We cannot but know *how*, and in *what sense* these things are proposed unto us, and what is expected from us thereon. Neither dare

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we give *another sense* of them in our minds, than what we judge to be the sense and intention of them who require our submission and obedience unto them. It is not certainly their design nor mind, that we should look on the *Offices* of the Church as *unwarrantable*, and on their Rule as inconvenient, so as to endeavour a *Reformation* in the one, and of the other. It is such a conformity they intend, as whereby we do, *virtually* at least, declare our approbation of all these things in the Church, and our acquiescency in them. Neither can we be admitted to put in any *Exception*, nor discharge our Consciences by a plain Declaration of what we dislike or dissent from, or in what sense we can submit unto any of these things. We take it therefore for granted, that in the conformity required of us, we must cordially and sincerely approve the present Ecclesiastical Government, and the Administration of Church-Discipline thereby. For it is the profession of our *Acceptance* of it, as proposed unto us; and if we acquiesce not therein, but express an uneasiness under it, we do it at the hazard of the Reputation of our Sincerity and Honesty in conforming. Now this condition of communion with the *Church of England*, is also *unscriptural*; and consequently unlawful to be made so. This is by many now plainly acknowledged: For they say there is *no Government* determined in the Scripture. But this now in force amongst

amongst us, is erected by the Authority of the *Magistrate*, who hath *supream* power in things Ecclesiastical: And on that ground a *lawful Government* they plead it to be, and lawful to be exercised, and so also by others to be submitted to. But we have now sundry times declared that this is not our present Question. We enquire not whether it be *Lawful* or no, or on what account it may be so esteemed, or how far it may be submitted unto, or wherein: But we say, the professed acknowledging of it with submission unto it, as the *Government of the Church*, is required of us as a necessary condition of our communion. If they are not so, give us liberty to declare our sense concerning it, without prejudice. And if it be so, then may we refuse this condition, as *unscriptural*. For in the case of Conformity, there is not only a submission to the Government required, but expressly (as was said) an approbation of it, that it is such as it ought to be. For in Religious things our *practise* declares a cordial approbation; as being a part of our Profession, wherein we ought to be sincere. Some again make some Pleas, that *Bishops*, and some Government by them, are appointed by the Apostles; and therefore a submission unto them may be justly required as a *condition of communion*. For we will not now dispute, but that whatever is so appointed, may be so required; although we believe that every particular Instance of this nature, is not

rigidly to be insisted on, if it belong not unto the Essentials of the Church, and it be *dubious* to some whether it be so appointed or no. But yet neither doth an admittance of this *Plea*, give us any relief in this matter. For suppose it should or might be proved, that there ought to be, according to the mind of Christ in all Churches, *Bishops* with a pre-eminence above *Presbyters* in Order or Degree; and that the Rule of the Church doth principally belong unto them that are so; yet will not this Concession bear an application to the present Question, so as to afford us any Relief. For the granting of things so *dubious* and *questionable*, can never give them such an evidence of Truth and firmitude in the Church, as to warrant the making of them *necessary conditions* of communion unto all Christians. Neither doth it follow from any thing that pretendeth to fall under Scripture-proof, that such Bishops should be *Diocesan*; that they should depend on *Archbishops* over them; that they should assume the whole power of Church-Rule and Discipline into their hands; that they should administer it by *Chancellors*, *Archdeacons*, *Commissaries*, and the like; that this should be done by Presentments, or *Indictments*, Citations, Processes, Litigious Pleadings, after the manner of *Secular or Civil Courts*, to the Exclusion of that Rule and Discipline which the Gospel directs unto, with the managment of it in Love and Brotherly compassion in the

the Name and by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. But these things we shall not in particular insist upon, for the Reason before given. This we must say, that take the *whole of the Government*, and the Administration thereof together, which by the conformity required of us we must testifie our *Approbation* of, and Acquiescence in, or we deal hypocritically with them that require it of us; and we know it to be so far *unscriptural*; as that an acknowledgment of it, and submission unto it, cannot duly and justly be made a *necessary condition* of communion unto us. It may be it will be said, that *submission unto the Government of the Church*, is not so much a condition of communion with it, as it is that wherein our *communion it self* with it, doth consist; and it is but a Fancy to think of communion with a Church without it. But this is otherwise; as appears in those Churches where all Rule and Government being left in the hand of the *Civil Magistrate*, there communion is meerly spiritual in the Administration of Evangelical Ordinances. And might but that be admitted, which Nature, Reason, the Law of the Christian Faith, and Gospel-Obedience, do require, namely, that Church-fellowship and Communion be built upon mens *own judgment and Choyce*; and this would go a great way towards the pacification of our Differences. But if this be so, and that all Church-communion consists in *submission to the Govern-*

ment of it, or at least that it doth so principally, it becomes them by whom it is owned and avowed so to do, to take care, that, that *Government* be derived from the Authority of Christ, and administered according to his Mind ; or all *Church Communion*, properly so called, will be overthrown.

Thirdly, We are required to use and observe the *Ceremonies* in Worship which the present Church hath appointed, or doth use and observe. This also is made a *necessary condition* of Communion unto us. For many are at this day actually cast out of all Communion for not observing of them. Some are so proceeded against for not observing of *Holy dayes*; some for not *Kneeling at the Sacrament* of the Lords Supper ; some for not using the *Sign of the Cross* in Baptism ; and what would become of Ministers that should neglect or omit to wear the *Surplice* in Sacred Administrations, is easie to conjecture. But these things are all of them unwritten and *unscriptural*. Great and many indeed have been the Disputes of learned men, to prove that although they have no Divine Institution, nor yet example of Apostolical or Primitive practise, yet that they may be *Lawfully used* for *Decency and Order* in the Worship of God. Whether they have evinced what they aimed at, is as yet undetermined. But supposing in this Case all to be as they would pretend, and plead that it should be, yet because they are all granted to be *Arbitrary inventions of men*, and very few

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of those who make use of them are agreed what is their proper use and signification, or whether they have any or no, they are altogether unmeet to be made a *necessary condition* of Communion. For enquiry may be made, on what Warranty, or by what Rule they may be appointed so to be? Those who preside in, and over the Churches of Christ, do so in his Name, and by his Authority: And therefore they can *impose nothing* on them as a Condition of their Communion together, but what his Name is upon, or what they have his Authority for: And it will be dangerous to set his Seal unto our own Appointments. For what men think meet to do *themselves* in the matters of the House of God and his Worship, it may be measured and accepted with him according to their Light and Design: But for what they *impose on others*, and that under no less penalty than the deprivation of the outward Administration of all the Priviledges procured for them by Jesus Christ, they ought to have his Warrant and Authority for. And their Zeal is to be bewailed, who not only cast men out of all Church Communion, so far as in them lyeth, for a refusal to observe those *voluntarily imposed Ceremonies* in sacred Worship, but also prosecute them with outward force to the Ruine of them and their Families; and we cannot but wonder that any should as yet think meet to make use of *Prisons*, and the destruction of men thereby, as an *Appendix* of their Ecclesiastical Discipline, exercised in

the highest severity, on no greater Occasions than the omission of the observance of these Ceremonies. Whether such proceedings are measured by *present Interest*, or the due consideration of what will be pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ at the last day, is not difficult to determine.

Fourthly, As we are *Ministers* there is in some cases required of us under the same penalty, an *Oath of Canonical obedience*. We need not labour to prove this to be *unscriptural*; nor, to avoid provocations, shall at present declare the Rise, Nature and Use of it, with the fierce Digladiations that have formerly been about it. We can look upon it no otherwise? but as that which is contrary to the Liberty, and unworthy of the Office of a Minister of the Gospel.

We know not any thing else which is required of us unto the end mentioned, unless it be of some a *Subscription unto the Articles of Religion*. And this, because the Scripture enjoins unto all a *Consent* unto sound Doctrine, and a *Form of words*, may be admitted so far as those Articles concern only Points of Faith, But whereas there is annexed unto them, and enjoyred with other things, an *Approbation* of all those Instances of Conditions of Communion, before insisted on, a *Subscription* unto the whole becomes of the same Nature with the things themselves therein approved of.

These are the *Conditions of Communion* with
the

the Church of *England*, which are proposed unto us, and which we are indispensibly to submit unto, if we intend to be partakers thereof; and these are all which we know, of that nature. That any of these are in particular *prescribed in the Word of God*, much less that they can derive any Warranty from thence to be made *necessary conditions of Church-Communion*, will not we suppose be pretended by any. If therefore any *Divisions* do ensue on the refusal of some to admit of these Conditions, the *Guilt* of them cannot by any Rule of Scripture, or from any example of the first Churches, be charged on them who make that refusal. Other groundless Accusations and Charges we value not; for this is but *Mans Day*, the Judgment whereof we neither stand nor fall unto. Yea, we esteem our selves obliged, in all peaceableness and sobriety to *bear witness* against such impositions, and unto that Liberty wherewith the Lord Christ hath made his Churches and Disciples free. And if once things were come unto that state, that men would assign no other *Terms of Church Communion*, than what Christ hath appointed, it would quickly appear where the guilt of our Divisions would remain, if any such Divisions would yet remain. But so long as there is a desire to make the Wills and Wisdomes of some men, fallible even as others, the *Rule* and measure of obedience in spiritual things, an end of strife and contention among Christians, will be expected in vain. And this we say, with hearts in

some measure sensible, and pained, to see the *Body of Christ* torn in pieces, by the lusts, passions, and carnal interests of men. Could we contribute any thing to the healing of the Wounds and Ruptures that are amongst Christians, provided it may have a *consistency* with the mind of Christ, and the Duty we owe unto him, (as indeed nothing else will really contribute any thing thereunto) we should with all readiness and faithfulness give up our best endeavours therein. And where we can do nothing else, we hope we shall bear with *Patience* those disdainful Reproaches which the *Pride of men*, blown up by a confluence of secular perishing advantages, prompts them to pour out upon us, for our non-compliance with their Impositions.

Secondly, By the *Conformity* required of us, we must consent unto the *Omission of sundry Duties*, which are made so unto us by the Command and Appointment of Jesus Christ. If we are at any time *hindred* in the discharge of any necessary Duty by others, we have somewhat to plead in our own excuse: But if we our selves *voluntarily* consent to the neglect or omission of them, we cannot avoyd the guilt of sin. And the worst way whereby such a consent may be expressed, is by *compact* and agreement with others; as though it were in our Power to *bargain* with other men, what Duties we will observe, and what we will omit in the Worship of God. Now in the *Conformity* required of us, we are to give this consent,
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and that as it were by Compact and Agreement, which deprives us of all pretence of excuse in our omissions. It is no time afterward to plead that we *would discharge such Duties*, were we not hindered or forbidden: We have our selves antecedently and *voluntarily* renounced a concern in such forbidden Duties. For no man can *honestly conform*, but it is with a declared Resolution to accept of all the Terms and Consequents of it, with an Approbation of them. Under this Notion it is, that we look on Conformity; and what others apprehend thereby, or understand therein, who seem to press men to *conform* unto what they do not *approve*, we know not. If then there be any omission of known Duties inseparably accompanying our *Conformity*, that thereby we solemnly consent unto.

This therefore we are obliged to *refuse*, because without sin, in the *voluntary* neglect and omission of Duty, we cannot comply with it; which therefore can be no *Schism* in us, nor what might in any way render us blameable. The Lord Christ hath prescribed no such Law of *Unity and Peace* unto his Churches, as that his Disciples should be bound constantly to neglect any *known* Duty, which they owe to himself, for their sakes. Nor do his Institutions interfere, that the observance of any one, should exclude a due attendance unto another. Neither doth he by his commands, bring any one into a necessity of doing that which is evil, or of *omitting* any thing that is required
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of him in the way of Duty. However therefore we value Church-Peace and Union, we dare not purchase it, by an *Abrenunciation* of any Duty we owe to Jesus Christ, nor would an Agreement procured on such Terms be of any use unto us, or of advantage to the Church its self. Wherefore that compliance in Church communion which would be obstructive of any *necessary Duties*, is not by the Lord Christ enjoined us, and therefore its omission cannot be culpable in us, but it would its self be our sin: Especially would it be thus, where the Duties so to be omitted, are such as are incumbent on us, by virtue of *especial Office*, wherein we are peculiarly required to be faithful. It remaineth therefore only, that we declare wherein we should by *conformity* engage unto the omission of such Duties as are indispensibly required of us. And this we shall do in some few Instances.

(1) Every Minister of the Gospel hath by the Appointment of Jesus Christ, the *whole immediate Care* of the Flock, whereof he is *Overseer*, committed unto him. That no part hereof which belongs unto their Edification is exempted from him, the *Charge* that is given unto him, and the *Account* which will be expected from him, do sufficiently evidence. For as Ministers are called *Overseers*, *Rulers*, *Guides*, *Pastors*, and the like; so are they commanded to *feed the Flock*, to *take the Oversight* of it, and to *Rule the House of God*, a discharge of all which must come into their Account.

Acts 20.

17. 28.

1 *Tim.* 3.

5.

1 *Pet.* 5.

1, 2, 3, 4,

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Heb. 5.

17.

Account. Nor is there any word spoken in the whole Scripture, relating to the Rule and Government of the Church, which is not spoken principally with respect unto them. Nor is there the least Intimation of an *Exemption* of any *Part* of the Discipline of the Gospel, from their Office, or Care. If it be pretended that there is, let the Places be produced wherein such an Exemption is made, or any Instances of it among the first Churches, and they shall be considered; for hitherto no such thing hath been attempted, that we know of. Nor is it at all concluded, from the Plea, that some are appointed unto a *Superior Degree* above others in the Rule of the Church. For a man may have the *whole Rule* of his Flock committed unto him, although he should be obliged to give an Account unto others of his Discharge thereof. It is therefore the Duty of all Ministers of the Gospel, not only to teach, instruct and preach to their Flocks, but to go before them also in *Rule and Government*, and in the Exercise of the Spiritual Discipline appointed in the Gospel, in the Order wherein it is appointed for their Edification. The *keys of the Kingdom of Heaven* are committed unto them, or they are not: If they are not, by what Authority do they take upon them to *open and shut* in the House of God, in Ministerial teaching, and authoritative Administration of sacred Ordinances? For these things belong unto the Authority which is given by Christ under that *Metaphorical*

phorical Expression of the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*; the Reason of the Allusion and its Application, being obvious. And if these are not received by any, they are Usurpers, if they undertake to administer unto the Church *authoritatively* in the Name of Jesus Christ. If they are given or granted unto them, how may it be made to appear that they are so, for the *Ends mentioned only*, but not for the Rule and Government of the Church, which also belongs unto them? where is the Exception in the grant made to them? where are the Limits assigned unto their *Power*, that they shall exercise it in some concerns of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, but not in others? And whereas the greatest and most necessary Parts of this Power, such as are Ministerial Teaching, and the Administration of the Sacraments, are confessedly committed unto them, how comes it to pass that the *less* should be reserved from them? For whereas the former are necessary to the very *Being* of the Church, the latter are esteemed by some scarcely to belong unto it. To say that *Bishops* only receive these *Keys*, and commit or lend the Use of them to others, for such Ends and Purposes as they are pleased to Limit, is both forreign to the Scripture, and destructive of all *Ministerial Power*. And if Ministers are not the Ministers of Christ, but of Men; if they have not their Authority from him, but from others; if that may be parcelled out unto them which they have from him,

him, at the Pleasure of any over them, there needs not much contending about them or their Office.

Besides, the *Relation* of these things one to another is such, as that if they are absolutely separated, their Efficacy unto Edification will be exceedingly impaired, if not destroyed. If those who have the Dispensation of the Word committed unto them, have not Liberty and Authority; if it be not part of their *Office-Duty*, to *watch over them* unto whom it is dispensed, and that accompanied with Spiritual weapons, *Mighty through God*, towards the fulfilling of the Obedience of some, and the *revenging of Disobedience* in others; if they have no Power to Judge, admonish or Censure them that walk unanswerably to the Doctrine of the Gospel preached unto them, and whose Profession they have taken upon them; they will be discouraged in the pursuit of their work, and the Word itself be deprived of an helpful Means appointed by Christ himself to farther its Efficacy. And those who shall content themselves with the *Preaching of the Word only*, without an Enquiry after its Success in the Minds and Lives of them that are committed to their Charge, by virtue of that Care and Authoritative Inspection which indeed belongs to their Office, will find that as they do discharge but *one Part* of their Duty, so they will grow cold and Languid therein also. And when there hath been better Success, as there hath

hath, where some against their wills have been hindred by Power from the Exercife of the *Charge* laid on them by Christ in this matter, making up as they were able by *private Solitude* and Perswasion, what they were excluded from attending unto in publick Ministerial Acts, it hath been an Effect of especial favour from God, not to be ordinarily expected on the account of any Rule. And thence it is, that for the most part things openly and visibly do fall out otherwise; the *People* being little reformed in their Lives, and *Preachers* waxing cold and formal in their work. And if the *Censures* of the Church, are administred by them who preach not the Word unto the People, they will be weak and enervous as unto any Influence on the Consciences of Men. Their minds indeed may be affected by them, so far as they are attended with *outward Penalties*; but how little this tends unto the Promotion of Holiness, or the Reformation of Mens Lives, Experience doth abundantly testifie. Church Discipline and Censures are appointed merely and solely, to *second, confirm, and establish* the word, and to vindicate it from abuse and contempt, as expressing the sense that Jesus Christ hath of *them* by whom it is received, and of *them* by whom it is despised. And it is the word alone which gives Authority unto Discipline and Censures. Where therefore they are so *separated*, as that those by whom the Word is administred, are excluded from an Interest in
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the Exercise of Discipline ; and those unto whom the Administration of Discipline is committed, are such as neither do, nor for the most part ought to preach the word, it cannot be, but that the Efficacy and success of them both will be impeded.

It is so also as to the Administration of the *Sacraments*, especially that of the *Supper of the Lord*. These are the principal Mysteries of our Religion, as to its external Form and Administration ; the Sacred *Rites* whereby all the Grace, Mercy, and Privileges of the Gospel are sealed and confirmed unto them who are in a due manner made partakers of them. About them therefore, and their orderly Administration, did the *Primitive Church* alwayes use their utmost care and diligence : And these in an especial manner did they make use of, with respect unto *them*, to whom they were to be communicated. For they feared, partly, lest men should be made *partakers of them* to their disadvantage, being not so qualified, as to receive them to their benefit ; as knowing, that where persons through their own defaults, obtain not *Spiritual profit* by them, they are in no small danger of having them turned into a Snare ; and partly, that these holy and sacred Institutions themselves might neither be prophaned, contaminated, nor exposed unto contempt. Hence, of those who *gave up their Names* unto the Church, and took upon them the Profession of the Gospel, the greatest part were

were continued for a long season under their *Care and Inspection*, but were not admitted into the Society of the Church in those Ordinances, until upon good trial they were approved. And if any one after his *Admittance*, was found to walk unanswerably unto his Profession, or to fall into any *known Sin*, whence Offence did ensue among the *Faithful*, he was immediately dealt withal in the Discipline of the Church; and in case of *Impenitency*, separated from the Congregation. Nor did the *Guides* or *Pastors* of the Churches think they had any greater Trust committed unto them, than in this, that they should use their utmost *Care and Diligence*, that persons unmeet and unworthy might not be admitted into that Church-Relation, wherein they should have a right to approach unto the Table of the Lord; and to remove from thence, such as had demeaned themselves unworthy of that communion. This they looked on as belonging unto their *Ministerial Office*, and as a Duty required of them in the discharge thereof, by Jesus Christ. And herein they had sufficient Direction, both in the *Rule of the Word*, as also in the *Nature of the Office* committed unto them, and of the work wherewith they were intrusted. For all Ministers are *Stewards of the Mysteries of Christ*, of whom it is required that they should be faithful. Now as it belongs unto a *faithful Steward* to distribute unto the Household of his Lord the provision which

which he hath made for them, and allows unto them, in due season; so also to keep off those from partaking in them; who without his *Masters Order and Warrant*, would intrude themselves into his Family, and unjustly possess themselves of the Priviledges of it. In these things doth the Faithfulness of a *Steward* consist. And the same is required in *Ministers* of the Gospel, with respect unto the Household of their Lord and Master, and the Provision that he hath made for it. These therefore being undeniably parts of of the duty of faithful Pastors or Ministers, it is evident how many of them we must solemnly *renounce* a concernment in, upon a compliance with the conformity, in matter and manner, required of us. Neither are these Duties such as are of light importance; or such as may be *omitted* without any detriment unto the Souls of men. The Glory of Christ, the Honour of the Gospel, the Purity of the Church, and its Edification, are greatly concerned in them. And they in whose minds a neglect of these things is countenanced by their attendance unto some *outward Forms* and Appearances of Order, have scarcely considered him aright, with whom they have to do. Some therefore of these Duties we shall instance in. First, It is the Duty of all faithful Ministers of the Gospel, to consider aright who are *so admitted* into the Church, as to obtain a *Right* thereby unto a Participation of all its Holy Ordinances.

ces. Take care they must, that none who have that Right granted them by the Law of Christ, be discouraged or excluded; nor any *altogether unworthy* admitted. And hereunto, as it is generally acknowledged, a *credible Profession* of Repentance, Faith and Obedience, that is of those which are sincere and saving, is required. To neglect an Enquiry after these things, in those that are to be admitted unto the *Table of the Lord*, is to prostitute the Holy Ordinances of the Gospel unto contempt and abuse; and to run cross to the constant practice of the Church in all *Ages*, even under its greater degeneracy. And the *Right Discharge* of this Duty, if we may be allowed to be in earnest in spiritual things; if it be believed, that it is internal Grace and Holiness, for the sake whereof, all outward Administrations are instituted, and celebrated, is of great weight and importance to the Souls of men. For on the part of persons to be admitted, if they are *openly* and *visibly* unworthy, what do we thereby, but what lies in us, to destroy their Souls? It cannot be, but that their hardning and impenitency in sin, will be hazarded thereby. For whereas they have granted unto them the most *Solemn Pledge* of the Lord Christ's Acceptance of them, and of his Approbation of their state towards God, that the Church is authorized to give; what reason have they to think that their condition is not *secure*, or to attend unto the Doctrine of the

the Church, pressing them to look after a change and relinquishment of it? For although the administration of the *Sealing Ordinances* doth not absolutely set the Approbation of Christ unto every individual person made partaker of them; yet it doth absolutely do so to the *Profession* which they make. They witness in the Name of Christ, his *Approbation* of it, and therewithal of all persons according to their real Interest in it, and answering of it. But those who in no considerable Instances do answer this Profession, can obtain nothing unto themselves but an occasion of *hardning*, and rendering them secure in a state of Impenitency. For tell men whilst you please of the necessity of *Conversion to God*, of Reformation and a holy Life, yet if in the course of their *Unholiness*, you confirm unto them the *Love of Christ*, and give them Pledges of their salvation by him, they will not much regard your other Exhortations. And thence it is come to pass in the world, that the *conformity* (worth that we contend about ten thousand times over) which ought to be between the *Preaching of the Word*, the *Administration* of the Sacraments, and the *Lives* of them who are Partakers of them, is for the most part lost. The Word still declares, that without *Regeneration*, without *saving Faith*, Repentance and Obedience, none can enter into the Kingdom of God. In the *Administration* of the other Ordinances, there is an abatement

made of this rigorous determination, and men have their salvation assured unto them without a *credible profession*, yea, or a presence of these Qualifications : And the *Lives* of the most who live in the enjoyment of these things, seem to declare, that they neither believe the one, nor much regard the other.

In the mean time, the Church it self, as to its *Purity*, and the holiness of its communion, is damaged by the neglect of a careful inspection into this Duty : For it cannot be, but that Ignorance, Worldliness, and Prophaneness will spread themselves as a *Leprosie* over such a Church ; whence their communion will be of very little use and advantage unto Believers. And hereby do Churches, which should be the *Glory of Christ*, by their expression of the Purity, Holiness and excellency of his Person and Doctrine, become the principal Means and Occasions of his *Dishonour* in the world ; and he that shall read that Christ loved his Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctifie and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word ; that he might present it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish ; will be much to seek after the Effects of this Design of Christ in his Love and Death, if he measure them by what appears in Churches under the power and influence of this neglect. Nor

Eph. 5.
25, 26,
27.

do those who plead for the continuance of things in such a state without *Reformation*, sufficiently consider the Representation that the Lord Christ made of himself, when he was about to deal with his Churches, some of which were overtaken with carelessness, and negligence in this matter: And yet hath he therein laid down a *Rule*, as to what kind of proceedings *Particular Churches* are to expect from him in all Generations. And it is a matter of no small *Amazement*, that any Churches dare approve and applaud themselves in such a state of impurity and defec-tion, as is evidently condemned by him, in those primitive patterns. Do men think he is *chang'd*, or that he will approve in them, what he judged and condemned in others? Or do they suppose he minds these things no more; and because he is *unseen*, that he *seeth* not; But we shall all find at length that he is the same *yesterday, to day and for ever*, and as that the Judge of all, he stands at the door.

Now this Duty, by *conformity* we renounce a concernment in, so as to attend unto it, by virtue of *Ministerial Authority*; whence the guilt of all the evil consequents thereof before mentioned, must fall on us. For it is known, that a meer shadow of the work of this Duty, and not so much as a shadow of *Authority* for it, would be left unto us: For what is allowed in case of a sudden *emergency*, upon an Offence taken by the whole Con-

gregation at the wickedness of any, (which is instructed beforehand, that this ought to be no matter of offence unto them) as it may be it cannot be proved ever to have been observed in any one Instance, so the allowed exercise of it would yield no relief in this case. And if any one should extend the *Rule* beyond the interpretation that is put upon it by the present *current administration* of Church-Discipline, there is no great question to be made what entertainment he would meet withal for his so doing. And it is to no purpose to come into the Church, as it were on purpose to go out again. And if instead of dealing with the Souls and Consciences of men, in the Name and Authority of Christ, as *Stewards of his Mysteries*, any can content themselves, to be *Informers* of Crimes unto others, we desire their pardon, if we cannot comply with them therein. And this is the Sum of what at present we are pleading about. It is the duty of *Ministers* of particular Churches, to judge and take care concerning the fitness of them, according unto the Rules of the Gospel, and the Nature of the Duty required of them, who are to be *admitted* into the Fellowship of the Church, and thereby unto a participation of all the holy Ordinances thereof. This Charge the Lord Christ hath committed unto them, and hereof will require an Account from them. Upon the neglect, or right discharge of this Duty, *Consequents* of great moment do depend;

yea the due attendance unto it, hath a great Influence into the Preservation of the *Being* of the Church, and is the Hinge whereon the well-being of it doth turn. But the power of exercising *Ministerial Authority* in a just attendance unto this Duty, we must renounce in our conformity, if we should submit thereunto. For we have shewed before, that after we have *conformed*, we can pretend no excuse from what is enjoyned us, or forbidden unto us by virtue thereof, all being founded in our own voluntary act and consent. Hence the guilt of this *Omission* must wholly fall on us, which we are not willing to undergo.

There are we know many *Objections* raised against the committing of this Power and Trust unto the Ministers of particular Congregations. Great *Inconveniences* are pretended as the consequents of it. The Ignorance and Unfitness of most Ministers for the discharge of *such a Trust*, if it should be committed unto them, the *Arbitrariness* and partiality which probably others will exercise therein, the *Yoke* that will be brought on the people thereby, and disorder in the whole, are usually pleaded to this purpose, and insisted on.

But 1. This *Trust* is committed unto some or other by Christ himself, and it is necessary that so it should be. Never did he appoint, nor is it meet, nor was it ever practised in the Primitive Church, that *every one*

should at his pleasure, on his own presumptions, intrude himself into a participation of the holy things of the House of God. The consideration of *Mens Habitations*, with their Age, and the like, are of *no consideration* with respect unto any Rule of the Gospel. Either therefore it must be left unto the pleasure and will of every man, be he never so ignorant, wicked or profligate, to impose himself on the *communion of any Church* of Christ, or there must be a Judgment in the Church, concerning them who are to be admitted unto their communion.

2. From the first planting of Christian Religion, those who *preached the Gospel* unto the conversion of the Souls of men, were principally intrusted with this Power, and it was their duty to *gather* them who were so converted, into that Church-Order and Fellowship wherein they might partake of the Sacred Mysteries, or solemn Ordinances of the Christian Worship. And this course of proceeding continued uninterrupted, with some little variation in the manner of the exercise of this Power and Duty, until *Corruption* had spread it self over the face of the whole professing Church in the world: But still a shadow and resemblance of it was retained, and in the *Papal Church* it self to this day, particular *Confessors* are esteemed competent Judges of the meetness of their *Penitents* for an admission unto the Sacraments of their Church. And who shall now

be esteemed more meet for the discharge of this duty, than those who succeed in the Office and Work of *Preaching the Word*, whereby men are prepared for Church-Society. And as it is a thing utterly unheard of in Antiquity, that those who *dispensed the Word* unto the Illumination and Conversion of men, should not have the power of their disposal as to their being *added to the Church*, or suspended for a time, as there was occasion; so it is as uncouth, that those who now sustain the same Place and Office unto the several Congregations attending on their Ministry, should be deprived of it.

3. If there be that *Ignorance* and *Disability* in Ministers, as is pretended, the blame of it reflects on them by whom they are made. And we are not obliged to accommodate any of the Wayes or Truths of Christ unto the *Sins* and *Ignorance* of men. And if they are insufficient for this work, how come they to be so sufficient for that which is greater; namely to *divide the Word aright* unto all their Hearers? But we speak of such Ministers as are *competently qualified* according to the Rule of the Gospel, for the discharge of their Office; and no other ought there to be. And such there are, blessed be God, through the watchful care of our Lord Jesus Christ over his Church, and his Supplies of the Gifts of his Spirit unto them. And such as these know it is their *Duty* to study, meditate, pray, ask *Counsel* and advice of others, per-

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haps of more Wisdom and Experience than themselves, that they may know how in all things to *behave themselves in the House of God*. Nor will God be wanting unto them who in sincerity seek direction from him, for the discharge of any Duty which he calls them unto. Other security of regular, orderly, and useful proceedings in this matter, Christ hath not given us; nor do we need: For the due Observance of *his* Appointments, will not fail the attaining of *his* Ends; which ought to be ours also.

4. The Judgment and acting of the Church-Officers in the *Admission* of persons into the compleat Society of the Faithful, is not *arbitrary*, as is pretended. They have the *Rule* of the Scripture, which they are diligently to attend unto. This is the entire Rule which the Lord Christ hath left unto his Church, both for their Doctrine and Discipline: Whatever is beyond this, or beside it, is not his, nor owned by him. What is not done according to this Rule is of no force in the *Consciences of men*, though it may stand, until lawfully recalled, for the preservation of outward Order. And whatever *Arbitrariness* may be supposed, in making a judgment upon the Rule of the Word, or in the Application of its Rule unto the present Case, it must abide in some or other. And who shall be thought more meet, or able to make a right determination thereon, than those whose *Duty* it is, and who have the advantage to be

be acquainted with all Circumstances belonging to the Case proposed. Besides, there is the Judgment of the *Church*, or the *Congregation* it self, which is greatly to be regarded. Even in the *Church of England* a suspension of any from the Lords Supper, is allowed unto the *Curate*, upon the Offence of the *Congregation*; which is a sufficient evidence, that a Judgment in this Case is owned to be their due: For none can take Offence, but upon a Judgment of the Matter at which he is offended; nor in this case, without a right to determine, that *some* Offences ought to debar Persons from a participation of the holy Ordinances; as also what those Offences are. This therefore is to be considered as an Aid and Assistance unto *Ministers* in the discharge of their Duty. It is the *Church* into whose communion persons are to be admitted. And although it be no way necessary, that determinations in this Case should be always made by *Suffrage*, or a *Plurality of Votes* in the Body of the *Church*; yet if the Sense or Mind of the *Congregation* may be known, or is so, (upon the Enquiry that ought to be made unto that purpose) that any persons are unworthy for their communion, it is not convenient they should be received; nor will their *Admission* in this case be of any advantage to themselves or the *Church*. The Light of Reason, and the Fundamental constitutive Principles of all *Free Societies*, such as the *Church* is, ascribe this

Acts 9. Liberty unto it; and the Primitive Church
 26, 27, practised accordingly: So also is the judg-
 28. ment and Desire of the *Congregation* to be
Ro. 14. 1. considered in the admission of any, if they
 are made known to the Guides of it. For
 it is expected from them, they should confirm
their Love unto them without dissimulation,
 as Members of the same Body; and there-
 fore in their approbation of what is done,
 their Rulers have Light and Encouragement
 in their own Duty. Besides, there is ap-
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 munion among Churches themselves*: By vir-
 tue hereof, they are not only to make use of
mutual Aid, Advice and Counsel, antec-
 edently unto a *Things* of Importance; but each
particular Church is upon just demand to give
 an account unto other Churches of what they
 do in the Administration of the Ordinances
 of the Gospel among them; and if in any
 thing it hath mistaken or miscarried, to recti-
 fy them upon their Advice and Judgment.
 And it were easie to manifest how through
 these Means and Advantages, the *Edification*
 of the Church, and the *Liberty* of Christi-
 ans, is sufficiently secured, in that *discharge*
 of *Duty* which is required in the Pastors of
 the Churches, about the *Admission* of per-
 sons unto a Participation of holy ordinances
 in them.

5. This Duty therefore, must either be
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 to the corrupting and debauching of all Churches,

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 all the Circumstances of it; whilst they have
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 thority, but by *Citations, Processes, Informa-*
tions and *Penalties*, according to the man-
 ner of Secular Courts of Judicature in Cau-
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 nistration of it is committed unto men, utter-
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 vernment of the Church, and think it won-
 drous unreasonable that others will not sub-

mit thereunto, and acquiesce therein. But what would they have us do? or what is it that they would perswade us unto? Is it that this *kind of Rule* in and over the Church, hath Institution given it in the *Scripture*, or countenance from *Apostolical Practice*? Both they and we know, that no pretence of any such *Idea* can be made: Is it, that the first Churches after the Apostles, or the Primitive Church, did find such a *kind of Rule* to be necessary, and therefore erected it among themselves? There is nothing more remote from Truth. Would they perswade us, that as *Ministers* of the Gospel, and such as have, or may have the care of particular Churches committed unto us, that we have no such concernment in these things, but what we may solemnly renounce, and leave them wholly to the managment of others? We are not able to believe them. The Charge that is given unto us, the Account that will be required of us, the nature of the Office we are called unto, continually *resists* other things unto us. Wherefore we dare not voluntarily engage into the neglect or omission of this Duty, which Christ requireth at our hands, and of whose neglect we see so many sad Consequents and Effects. The Lord Christ, we know hath the same *Thoughts*, and makes the same Judgment of his Churches, as he did of old, when he made a solemn *Revelation* and Declaration of them: And then we find that he charged the *Failings*, Neglects.

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lects, and Miscarriages of the Churches principally upon the *Angels* or Ministers of them. And we would not willingly by our neglect, render our selves obnoxious unto his Displeasure, nor betray the Churches whereunto we do relate, unto his just indignation, for their declension from the Purity of his Institutions, and the vigour of that Faith and Love, which they had professed. We should moreover by the *Conformity* required of us, and according to the Terms on which it is proposed, engage our selves against the exercise of our *Ministerial Office* and *Power*, with respect unto them who are already Members of Particular Churches. For this we carry along with us, that by *Conforming* we voluntarily consent unto the whole *state of Conformity*, and unto all that we are to do, or not to do, by the Law thereof. Now it is not to be expected, that all who are duly *initiated* or joyned unto any Church, shall always walk blameless according unto the *Evangelical Rule* of obedience, without giving offence unto others. The state of the Church, is not like to be so *blest* in this World, that all who belong unto it should be constantly and perpetually inoffensive. This indeed is the *Duty* of all, but it will fall out otherwise. It did so amongst the *Primitive Churches* of old, and is not therefore otherwise to be expected amongst us, on whom the ends of the world are come, and who are even pressed with the Decayes and Ruines of it. Many *Hypocrites* may obtain an
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1 Cor. 5.
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2 Cor. 2.
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2 Co. 7.
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Mat. 16.
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Mat. 18.
15, 16,
17, 18,
19, 20,
Rev. 2 2.

admission into Church Societies, by the strictest Rules that any can proceed upon therein. And these after they have known and professed the wayes of Righteousness, may, and often do turn aside from the holy Commandment delivered unto them, and fall again into the Pollution of the world. Many good men, and really sincere Believers, may through the power of Temptations, be surprized into faults and sins, scandalous to the Gospel, and offensive to the whole Congregation, whereof they are Members. Hath the Lord Christ appointed no Relief in and for his Churches in such Cases; no way whereby they may clear themselves from a participation in such impieties; or deliver themselves from being looked on as those who give countenance unto them, as they who continue in this Communion may and ought to be; no Power whereby they may put forth from among them, the old Leaven which would otherwise infect the whole; no way to discharge themselves and their Societies of such Persons as are impenitent in their Sins? No Means for the awakening, conviction, Humiliation, and Recovery of them that have offended; no way to declare his Mind and Judgment in such Cases, with the Sentence that he denounceth in Heaven against them that are impenitent? If he hath done none of these things, it is evident, that no Churches in this world can possibly be preserved from disorder and Confusion. Nor can they by Love and the Fruits of an holy Communion,

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niou, be kept in such a condition, as wherein he can be pleased with them; or continue to walk amongst them: For let men please themselves whilst they will, with the *Name of the Church*, it is no otherwise with them, where Persons *Obstinately and impenitently wicked*, and whose Lives are wholly discrepant from the Rule of the Gospel, are suffered to abide without controll. But if he hath made the Provision enquired after in this Case, as it is evident that he hath, both the *Authority* he hath granted unto his Church for these Ends, his Commands to exercise it with Care and Watchfulness, with the Rules given them to proceed by; with the known End of all Instituted Churches for the Promotion of Holiness, being all open and plain in the Scripture, it must then be enquired, unto whom this Trust is *firstly committed*, and of whom these Duties are principally required.

For *Private Members* of the Church, what is their Duty, and the way how they may regularly attend unto the Discharge of it according to the Mind of Christ, in case of scandalous Sins and Offences among them, they are so plainly and paticularly laid down and directed, as that setting aside the Difficulties that are cast on the Rule herein, by the extremely forced and unprovable exceptions of some interested Persons; that none can be ignorant of what is required of them, *Mat. 18. v. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.* And a Liberty to discharge their Duty herein, they are bound

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Lev. 19.
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1 Joh. 2.
9, 10. &
3. 15.

by the Law of Christ in due Order to provide for. If they are abridged hereof, and deprived thereby of so great a Means of their own *Edification*, as also of the usefulness required in them towards the *Church*, whereof they are Members, it is a spiritual Oppression that they suffer under. And where it is voluntarily neglected by them, not only the Guilt of their own, but of other *Mens sins* also lies upon them. Neither is their own Guilt small herein; For *suffering sin to abide on a Brother* without reproof, is a fruit of *hatred* in the Interpretation of the *Law*; and this hatred is a sin of an heynous Nature, in the sense of the *Gospel*. The Duty also of the *whole Church* in such Cases is no less evidently declared. For from such Persons as walk disorderly, and refuse to reform, on due Admonition, they are to *withdraw*, and to *put from amongst them* such obstinate Offenders; as also previously thereunto, to *watch* diligently lest any root of *bitterness* spring up among them, whereby they might be defiled. And hereunto also are subservient all the Commands that are given them to *exhort* and *admonish* one another, that the *whole Church* may be preserved in Purity, Order, Holiness and Faithfulness. But the chief enquiry is, with whom rests the *Principal Care* and *Power*, according to the Mind of Christ, to see the *Discipline* of the Church in Particular Congregations exercised, and to exercise it accordingly. If this should be found to be in the

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Ministers, and through their neglect in the Administration of it, Offenders be left in their sins and Impenitency, without a due Application of the means for their *Healing* and Recovery; if the Church its self come to be corrupted thereby, and to fall under the *Displeasure of Jesus Christ*; as these things, in one Degree or other, more or less will ensue on that neglect, it will not turn unto their *Comfortable Account* at the great Day. That this is their Duty, that this *Authority* and *Inspection* is committed unto them, the Reasons before insisted on, in the Case of *Admission*, do undeniably evince. And if those Ministers who do *Conscientiously* attend unto the Discharge of their Ministerial Office towards particular Flocks, would but examine their *own hearts* by the Light of open and plain Scripture Testimonies, with the Nature of their *Office*, and of the work they are engaged in, there would need little arguing to convince them, of what Trust is committed unto them, or what is required from them. If the Consciences of others are not concerned in these things, if they have no Light into the Duty which seems to be incumbent on them, their Principles and Practices, or as we think mistakes and neglects, can be no Rule unto us. What we may be *forbidden*, what we may be hindered in, is of another Consideration. But for us *voluntarily* to ingage unto the Omission of that Duty, which we cannot but believe that it will be required of us, is an

Evil which we are every way obliged to avoid.

There are also sundry *Particular Duties*, relating unto these that are more general, which in like manner, on the Terms of Communion proposed unto us, must be foregone and omitted. And where by these means or neglects some of the Principal ways of Exercising *Church Communion* are cast out of the Church, some of the means of the Edification of its Members are wholly lost, and sundry Duties incumbent on them are virtually prohibited unto them, untill they are utterly grown into disuse, it is no wonder if in such Churches where these Evils are inveterate and Remediless, *Particular Persons* do peaceably provide for their own Edification by joyning themselves unto such Societies as wherein the Rule of the Gospel is more practically attended unto. It is taken for granted that the Church is not corrupted by the *wicked Persons* that are of its Communion; nor its Administrations defiled by their Presence and Communication in them; nor the Edification of others prejudiced thereby, because it hath been so said by some of the *Ancients*; though whether suitably unto the Doctrine of the *Apostles* or no, is very questionable. But suppose this should be so; yet where *wicked Persons* are admitted, without Distinction or Discrimination, unto the Communion of the Church where they are *tollerated* therein, without any procedure with them, or against them,

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them, contrary to exprefs Rules of the Scripture given to that purpose; fo that thofe who are really *Pious* among them can by no means prevail for the Reformation of the whole, they may, not only without breach of Charity, impairing of Faith or Love, or without the leaft fufpition of the Guilt of *Schifm*, forfake the Communion of fuch a Congregation, to joyn unto another, where there is more Care of Piety, Purity, and Holinefs; but if they have any *Care* of their own Edification, and a *due Care* of their Salvation, they will underftand it to be their Duty fo to do.

And we may a little touch hereon once for all. The General End of the Inftitution of Churches, as fuch, is the vifible managment of the *Enmity* on the part of the *feed of the Woman*, Chrift the Head, and the Members of his Body myftical, againft the *Serpent* and his Seed. In the purfuit of this End, God ever had a Church in the world, *feperate* from perfons openly profane, doing the work of the Devil their Father. And there is nothing in any Church Conftitution, which tends unto, or is compliant with, the *mixing* and reconciling thefe diftinct feeds, whilft they are fuch, and vifibly appear fo to be. And therefore as the *Types*, *Prophecies* and Promifes of the Old Testament, did declare that when all things were actually *brought unto an Head* in Chrift Jefus, the Churches and all things that belong unto it fhould be *Holy*; that is, vifibly

Isa. 26. 2. so ; so the Description generally, and uniformly given us of the Churches of the New Testament, when actually called and erected, is, that they consisted of Persons *called, sanctified, justified, ingrafted into Christ* ; or Saints, Believers,, faithful ones, purified and separate unto God. Such they professed themselves to be, such they were judged to be by them that were concerned in their Communion ; and as such they ingage themselves to walk in their Conversation. By what Authority so great a Change should be now wrought in the Nature and Constitution of Churches, that it should be altogether indifferent of what sort of persons they do consist, we know not. Yea, to speak plainly, we greatly fear that both the Worship and Worshipers are defiled, where open impenitent sinners are freely admitted unto all sacred Administrations, without controul. And we are sure, that as God complaineth that his *Sanctuary is polluted*, when there are brought into it, *strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh* ; so the true Members of the Church are warned of the Evil and dangers of such defiling mixtures, and charged to watch against them,
1 Cor. 5. We might yet further insist on the great evil it would be in us, if we should give a *seeming outward Approbation* unto those things, and their use, which we cannot but condemn, and desire to have removed out of the Worship of God. And moreover, there is, as we believe, an Obligation upon us, to give a
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Testimony unto the Truth about the Worship of God, in his Church; and not absolutely to hide the Light we have received therein under a Bushel. Nor would we render the Reformation of the Church absolutely hopeless, by our professed compliance with the Things that ought to be reform'd. But what hath been pleaded already is sufficient to manifest, that there neither is, nor can be a *Guilt of Schism* charged either on Ministers or People who withhold themselves from the Communion of that Church, or those Churches, whereof the things mentioned are made *Conditions* necessary and indispensable; and wherein they must be denied the Liberty of performing many Duties made necessary unto them by the Command of Jesus Christ. And as the rigid Imposition of *unscriptural Conditions* of Communion, is the principal Cause of all the *Schisms* and Divisions that are among us; so let them be removed and taken out of the way, and we doubt not, but that among all that sincerely profess the Gospel, there may be that peace, and such an Agreement obtained, as in observance whereof, they may all exercise those Duties of *Love* which the strictest Union doth require. These we profess ourselves ready for, so far as God shall be pleased to help us in the Discharge of our Duty; as also to renounce every Principle or Opinion whereof we may be convinced that they are in the least opposit^e unto, or inconsistent with, the *Royal Law of Love*, and the due exercise thereof.

thereof. If men will continue to charge, accuse or revile us, either out of a causeless distast against our persons, or *Misunderstanding of our Principles* and wayes, or upon uncertain Reports, or meerly prompted thereunto, through a vain elation of mind arising from the Distance wherein, through their Secular Advantages, they look upon us to stand from them; as we cannot help it, so we shall endeavour not to be greatly moved at it: For it is known, that this hath been the Lot and Portion of those who have gone before us, in the Profession of the Gospel, and *sincere endeavors* to vindicate the Worship of God from the Disorders and Abuses that have been introduced into it; and probably will be theirs who shall come after us. But the whole of our care is, that in *godly simplicity and sincerity* we may have our conversation in the World, not corrupting the Word of God, nor using our Liberty as a cloak of *maliciousness*, but as becomes the *Servant of God*.

But perhaps it will yet be pleaded, that this is not the whole which we are charged withall: For it is said that we do not *only withdraw our selves from the communion of the Church of England*, but also that we assemble in separate Congregations for the Celebration of the whole Worship of God; whereby we evidently make a Division in the Church, and contract unto our selves the guilt of Schism; For what can there be more required thereunto. But what would those who make use of this Objection

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have us to do? would they have us *starve* our souls, by a wilful neglect of the means appointed for their nourishment? Or would they have us live in a constant omission of all the Commands of Christ? By them, or those whose Cause they plead, we are *cast out* and excluded from Church Communion with them, by the *unscriptural Conditions* of it which they would force upon us. The Distance between us that ensues hereon, they are the *Causes* of, not we; for we are ready to joyn with them, or any others, upon the Terms of Christ and the Gospel. And do they think it meet that we should revenge *their fault* upon our selves, by a voluntary abstinence from all the wayes and means of our edification? Doth any man think that Jesus Christ leaves any of his Disciples unto such a condition, as wherein it is impossible they should *observe his Commands* and Institutions without sin? That we should joyn in some Societies, that in them we should assemble together for the worship of God in him, and that we should in them *do and observe whatever he hath appointed*, we look upon as our indispensable Duty, made so unto us by his Commands. These things, say some, you shall not do with us, if you will do no more; and if you do them among your selves, you are *Schismatics*. But this is a severity, which we know we shall not meet with at the last Day. *We stand at the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ.*

It will, it may be, be demanded, by what *Warrant or Authority* we do assemble our selves in Church Societies for the Administration of Gospel Ordinances; and who gave us this Authority? VVe answer, That it is acknowledged there is a *Difference* between them and us, so that with them we cannot enjoy the VVorship of God. But of this Difference we are not the *Cause*, nor do give occasion to any blameable Divisions, by our Principles or Practices. VVhere the Cause is found, there the guilt remains. This being the state of things with us, it is fond to imagine that any Professors of the Gospel do absolutely want a *Warranty or Authority* to obey Jesus Christ, to observe his Commands, and to serve him according to his revealed VVill. His *Command in his Word*, his Promise of the acceptance of them, and of his presence among them, in all the Acts of their holy obedience; the assistance and guidance of his holy Spirit, which he affords graciously unto them; are a sufficient *Warranty and Authority* for what they do in expresse compliance with his Commands, and more they will not plead a power for. VVhere the *Spirit and Word* of Christ are, there is his Authority. And this is no otherwise committed unto men, but to enable them to act *obedientially* towards him, and *Ministerially* towards others. And were Church Actings considered more with respect unto the *Obedience* that in them is performed unto Christ, which is their first and principal Consideration,

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on, it would quickly be evident whence men might have *Authority* for their performance. And by the same means are we directed in their Order and Manner. Besides the *Ministers* who go before the people in their Assemblies, are all of them (so far as we know) solemnly set apart unto their Office and VVork, according unto what Christ hath appointed; and their Duty it is, to teach unto all men the good wayes of Christ, and to go before them who are convinced and perswaded by them, in their practise. These things hath their *Lord and Master* required of them, and an account concerning them will he call them unto at the last Day. *A Dispensation is committed unto them*, and a necessity is thence incumbent on them to preach the Gospel; and who shall excuse them if they neglect so to do? For that all those who are Ministers of the Gospel, are called to preach the Gospel, and that diligently; every one, according as he hath received the *Gift of the Grace of God*; is out of question with them that do beleive the Gospel: And of the *Stewardship* which is committed unto them herein, are they to give an *Account*. And we do know that it is a fearful thing for sinners, that is, wilful neglecters of his Commands, to fall into the hands of the living God. Our Lord Jesus Christ also hath testified beforehand, that he who setteth his hand to this Plough, and looks back again, is not fit for the Kingdome of God. He alone who calls them to this work, can discharge them of it;

it; and that either by the Rule of his Word, or his Providence. And when men are invincibly hindred, as many are at this day, it is their suffering, but not their sin. Otherwise none can *absolve them* from the Duty they owe to Jesus Christ in this matter; and that *Debt* which they owe to the Souls of men, in undertaking the work of the Ministry. Some indeed suppose, or pretend to suppose, that a Prohibition given them by *Superiors*, forbidding them to preach, though not by, nor according unto any Rule of the Gospel, doth discharge them from any Obligation so to do, that it shall be no more their Duty. It would do so no doubt, had they received no other command to preach the Gospel, nor from any other Authority, than that of and from those *Superiors* by whom they are forbidden. But being perswaded that they have so from him who is *higher than the highest*, they cannot acquiesce in this Discharge, nor being *bought with a price*, can they now be *Servants of men*. But by whom are they thus forbidden to preach? It will be supposed, that the Church which differs from them, and which originally makes it self a *part* in these Differences, by the conditions of communion which it would impose upon them, is no competent Judge in this case: Nor will their Prohibitions, who apparently thereby revenge their own Quarrel, influence the Consciences of them that dissent from them. For we speak not of what *will* or may take place;

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place; but what the *Consciences of men* will or may be concerned in. By the Civil Magistrate they are not forbidden to preach, that we know of: It is true, they are prohibited to preach in the *Legal Publick Meeting Places* or Churches; and these places being in the power and care of the Magistrate, it is meet his *Terms and conditions* of their use should be accepted of, or his Prohibition observed, or his Penalty quietly undergone, where a peaceable occasion is made use of contrary unto it. As to other places, Ministers are not *absolutely forbid to preach* in them; no such power is as yet assumed or exercised: Only the *Manner of Assemblies* for Sacred Worship, and the *Number* of them that may assemble, are regulated by Laws for Secular Ends, or Civil Security; and that under express Penalties incurred on a contrary practice. But the *Consciences of Ministers* cannot be concerned in such Laws, so far as to be exempted by them from the Obligation that lies upon them from the *command of Christ* to preach the Gospel. This they are commanded by him to do, and others know the *penalties* from men, under the danger whereof they must attend unto them. Besides the reason of these *Legal Prohibitions*, so far as they do extend, are taken, from Civil considerations alone; namely, of the Peace and quiet of the Nation; and not from any Scripture or Religious Rules. And were these Prohibitions only *temporary*, or occasional,

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suited unto such Emergencies as may give
 countenance unto their necessity, there might
 be a proportionable compliance with them.
 But whereas they respect *all times alike*, it is no
 doubt incumbent on them, who act any thing
 contrary unto such *Prohibitions*, to secure
 their own Consciences, that they no way in-
 terfere with the Intention and End of the
 Law, by giving the least countenance or oc-
 casion unto *civil disturbances*; and others al-
 so, by their peaceable deportment in all they
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 lent* from the Lord Christ to trade withal, have
 accepted of his Terms, and engaged into his
 Service, without any condition of exception
 in case of such Prohibitions, it is not possible
 they should satisfie their Consciences in desist-
 ing from their work on such Occurrences,
 any farther than in what they must yield unto
 outward force and necessity. It is pretend-
 ed by some, that if such a *Legal Prohibition*
 were given unto all the Ministers of the Go-
 pel, it would not be obligatory unto them:
 For if it should be so esteemed, it were in the
 power of any *Supream Magistrate lawfully*
 to forbid the whole work of Preaching the
 Gospel unto his Subjects; which is contrary
 to the Grant made by God the Father, unto
 Jesus Christ, that *all Nations should be his In-
 heritance*; and the Commission he gave thereon
 unto his Apostles to *teach all Nations*, and to
preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven.
 But it being *some* only that are concerned in
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this Prohibition, it is their duty for Peace sake, to acquiesce in the will of their *Superi-ors* therein, whilst there are others sufficient to carry on the same work. That Peace is or may be secur'd on other Terms, hath been already declared: But that *one mans Liberty* to attend unto his Duty, and his doing it accordingly, should excuse another from that which is *personally* incumbent on himself, is a matter not easily apprehended, nor can be readily digested. Besides, what is pretended of the *sufficient number of Preachers* without any contribution of aid from the *Non-conformists*, is indeed but pretended: For if all that are found in the Faith, gifted, and called to the work of the *Ministry* in these Nations, were equally encouraged unto, and in their work, yet would they not be able to answer the necessities of the Souls of men, requiring an attendance unto it, in a due measure and manner; And those who have exercised themselves unto *compassionate thoughts* towards the multitudes of poor Sinners in these Nations, will not be otherwise minded. Wherefore these things being premised, we shall shur up these Discourses, with a brief Answer unto the foregoing Objection which was the occasion of them. And we say;

1. That *Schism* being the Name of a Sin, or somewhat that is evil; it can in no Circumstances be any maes Duty. But we have manifested, as satisfactorily unto our own Consciences, so we hope unto the minds of un-
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prejudiced persons, that in our *present condition*, our Assemblies for the Worship of God, are our expresse Duty, and so can have no Affinity with any sin or evil. And those who intend to charge us with *Schisme*, in or for our Assemblies, must first prove them not to be our Duty.

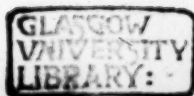
2. Notwithstanding them, or any thing by us performed in them, we do preserve our communion entire with the *Church of England* (that is, all the visible Professors of the Gospel in this Nation) as it is a part of the *Catholick Church*, in the Unity of the Faith owned therein, provided it be not measured by the present Opinions of some, who have evidently departed from it. Our *Non-admittance* of the present Government and Discipline of the Church, as apprehended National, and as it is in the hands of meerly *Ecclesiastical persons*, or such as are pretended so to be, we have accounted for before. But we are *One* with the whole Body of the Professors of the Protestant Religion, in a publick avowment of the same Faith.

3. Into *Particular Churches* we neither are, nor can be admitted, but on those terms and conditions, which not only we may justly, but which we are bound in a way of Duty to refuse. And this also hath been pleaded before. Besides, no man is so obliged unto communion with any *Particular or Parochial Church* in this Nation, but that it is in his own power at any time to relinquish it, and

and to secure himself also from all Laws which may respect that communion, by the removal of his Habitation. It is therefore evident that we never had any relation unto any *Parochial Church*, but what is Civil and Arbitrary, a relinquishment whereof is practised at pleasure every day, by all sorts of men. Continuing therefore in the constant Profession of the same Faith, with all other *Protestants in the Nation*, and the whole Body thereof, as united in the Profession of it under one Civil or Political Head; and having antecedently no *Evangelical Obligation* upon us unto Local communion in the same Ordinances of Worship *numerically* with any particular or *Parochial Church*; and being prohibited from any such communion by the Terms, Conditions and Customes indispensibly annexed unto it, by the Laws of the Land, and the Church, which are not lawful *for us to observe*, being Christs Freemen: It being moreover our duty to assemble our selves in Societies for the Celebration of the Worship of God in Christ, as that which is expressly commanded; we are abundantly satisfied, that however we may be *censured*, judged, or condemned by men, in and for what we do; yet that he doth both *accept* us here, and will acquit us hereafter, whom we serve and seek in all things to obey. Wherefore we are not convinced that any *Principle* or practice which we own or allow, is in any thing contrary to that *Love, Peace, and Unity*,
S which

which the Lord Christ requireth to be kept and preserved among his Disciples, or those that profess Faith in him, and Obedience unto him according to the Gospel. We know not any thing in them but what is consistent and compliant with that *Evangelical Union*, which ought to be in, and among the Churches of Christ, the terms whereof we are ready to hold and observe, even with them that in sundry things differ from us; as we shall endeavour also to exercise all Duties of the same Love, Peaceableness, and Gentleness, towards them by whom we are hated and reviled.

F I N I S.



P^{4g}
l. 1.
securi
hither
r. 18.
state.
l. 19.
l. 12.
avoid
p. 152
p. 156
l. 21.
l. 28.
p. 20

ERRATA.

P⁴g 3. line 21 read. from him: p. 5. l. 9. r. train of.
l. 12. for seriousness, r. fierceness, p. 16. l. 26. for
security, r. severity. l. 33. of it (add) which we have
hitherto professed. p. 19. l. 23. r. searcher. p. 31. l. 23.
r. 18. p. 32. l. 29, r. principles. p. 38. l. 9. r. Church
state. p. 49. l. 1. r. in this. p. 66. l. 4. r. lost us. p. 87.
l. 19. for particularities, r. particular Rites. p. 98.
l. 11. for this, r. their. p. 100. l. 10. for according, r.
avoiding. p. 116. l. 2. r. could. p. 130. 17. r. *Ascedius*
p. 151. l. 20. for your. r. their. p. 155. l. 6. r. gender.
p. 156. l. 16. r. occasions. p. 159. l. 12, r. this. p. 167.
l. 21. r. their. 186. l. 2. for erected, r. enacted. p. 190.
l. 28. r. *Easter* was. p. 198. l. 13. r. indefeazable.
p. 202. l. 20. r. expressed.
